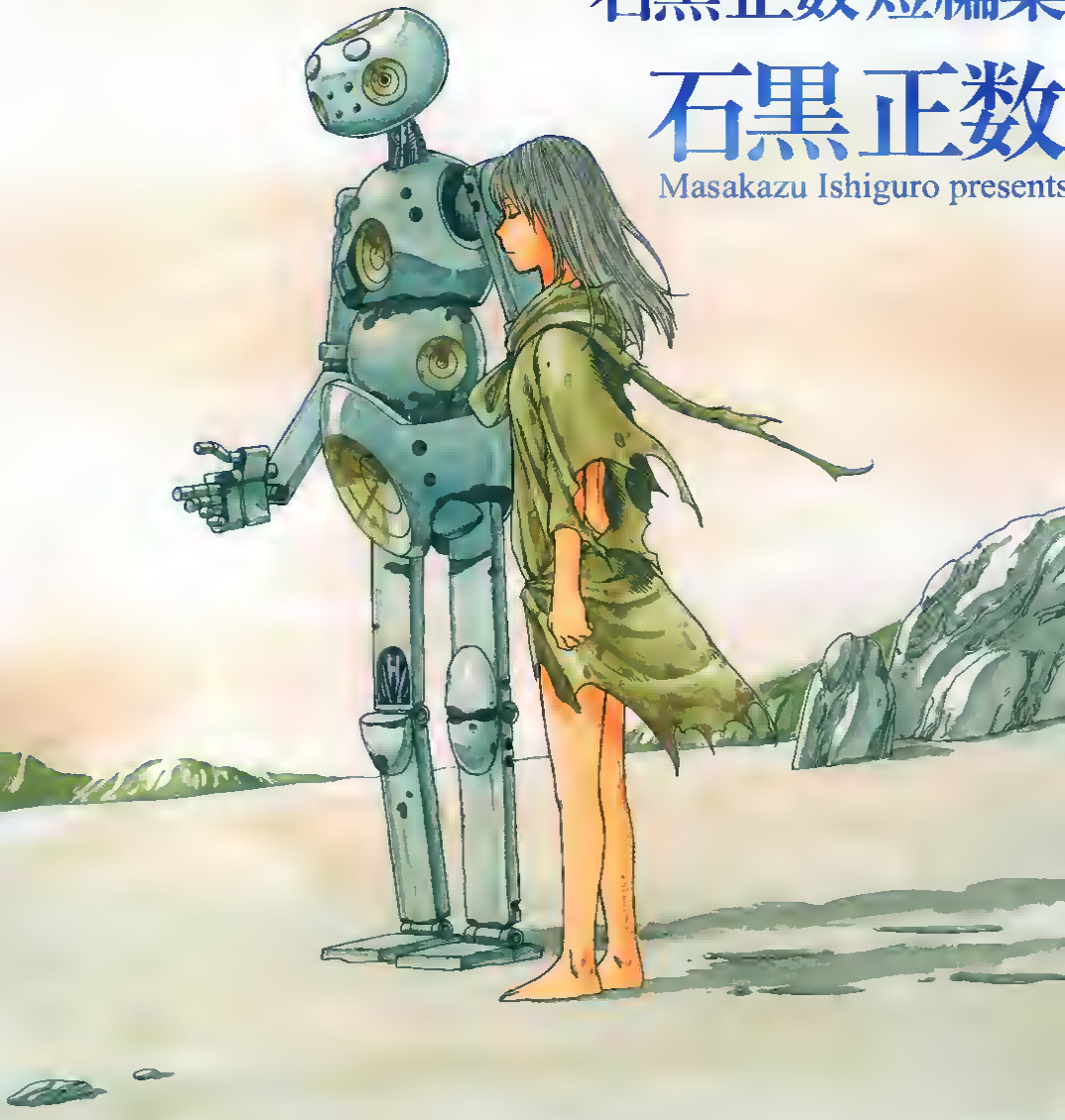
Presentforme

石黒正数短編集

石黒正数

Masakazu Ishiguro presents



YOUNG KING COMICS

YOUNG KING COMICS

Present for me

石黒正数

ISHIGURO MASAKAZU

Present for me

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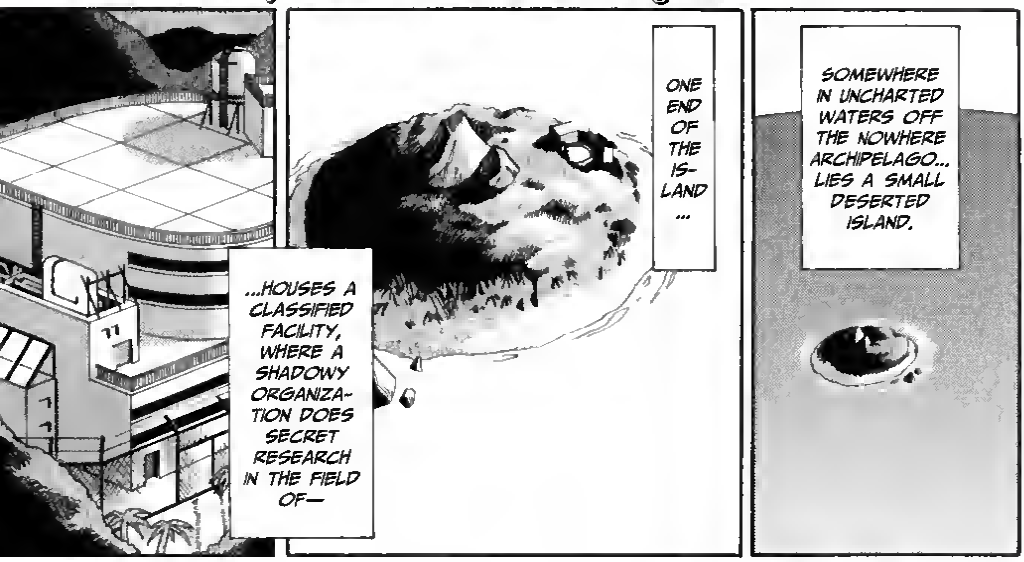
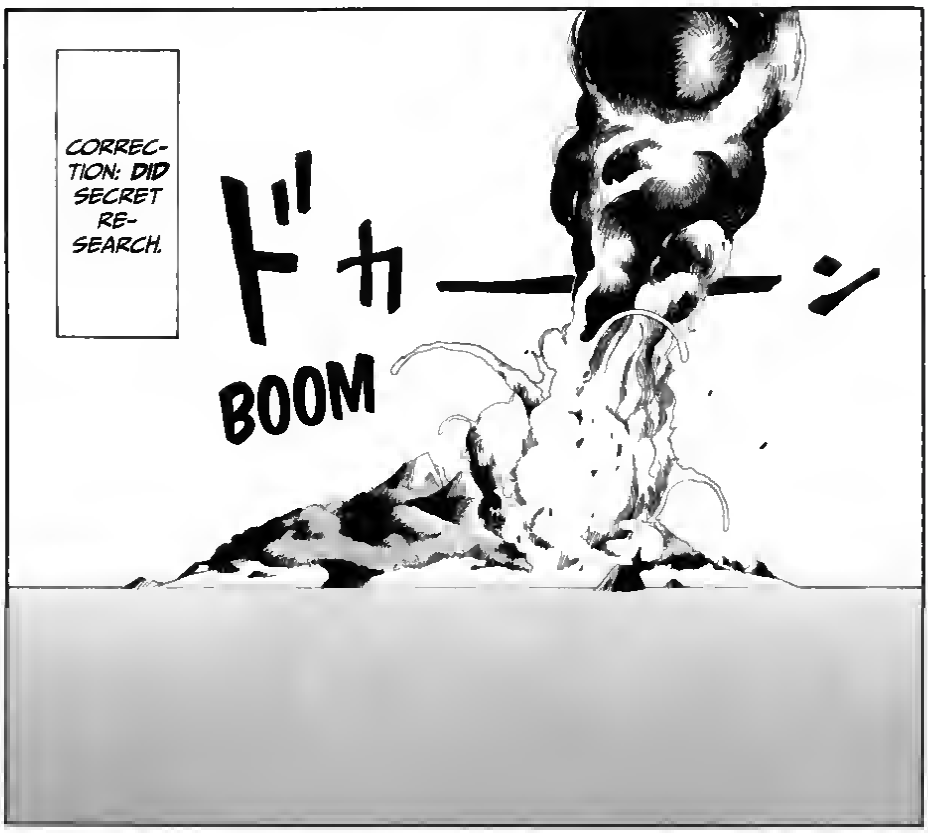
*THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION.

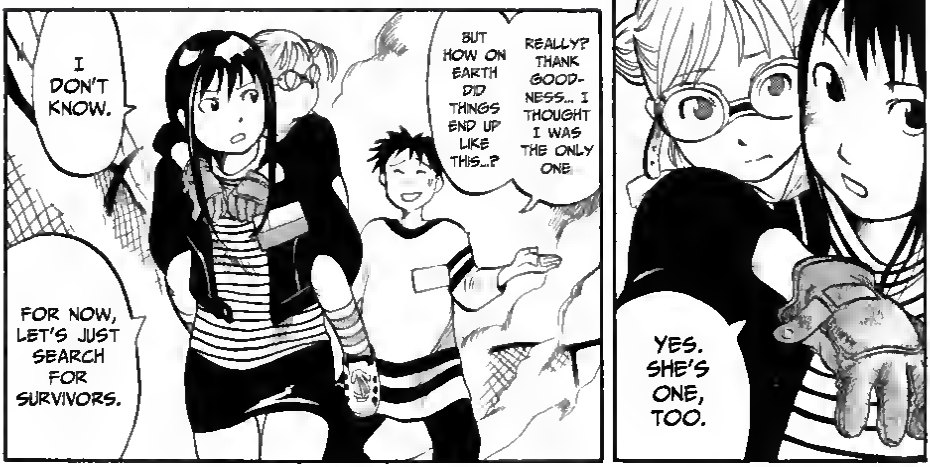

SOMEWHERE IN UNCHARTED WATERS OFF THE NOWHERE ARCHIPELAGO... LIES A SMALL DESERTED ISLAND.
ONE END OF THE IS-LAND ...
...HOUSES A CLASSIFIED FACILITY, WHERE A SHADOWY ORGANIZA-TION DOES SECRET RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF—

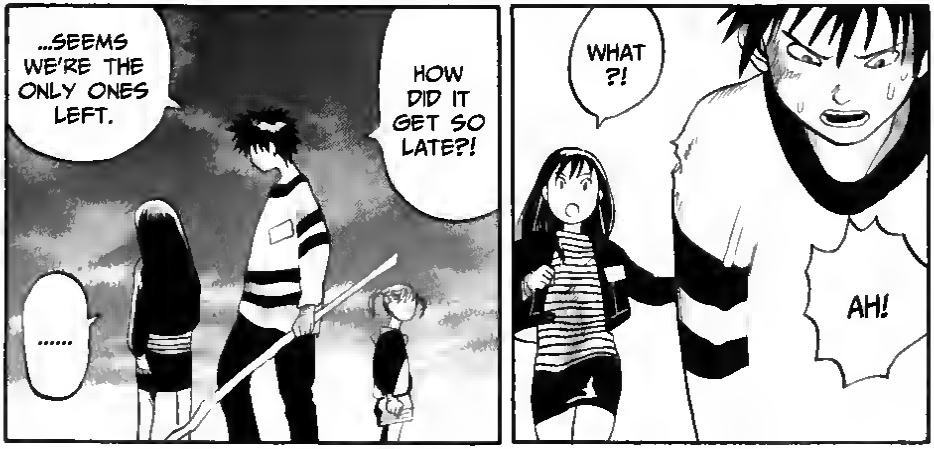

CORREC-TION: DID SECRET RE-SEARCH.
ドカーーーン
BOOM

FORWARD, TEEN PSYCHIC SQUAD!

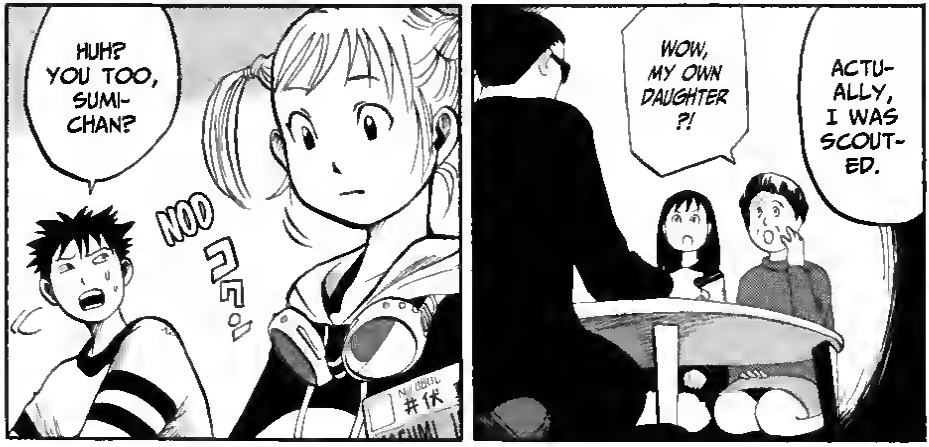
WHOOSH
ズッ
ANY-BODY HERE —?!
COUGH.
COUGH.
WHAT... WHAT'S HAP-PENED?
GAH ?!
I'M DEAD —!
CRACK

THUD
ドドド


I DON'T KNOW.
FOR NOW, LET'S JUST SEARCH FOR SURVIVORS.
BUT HOW ON EARTH DID THINGS END UP LIKE THIS...?
REALLY? THANK GOOD-NESS... I THOUGHT I WAS THE ONLY ONE
YES. SHE'S ONE, TOO.

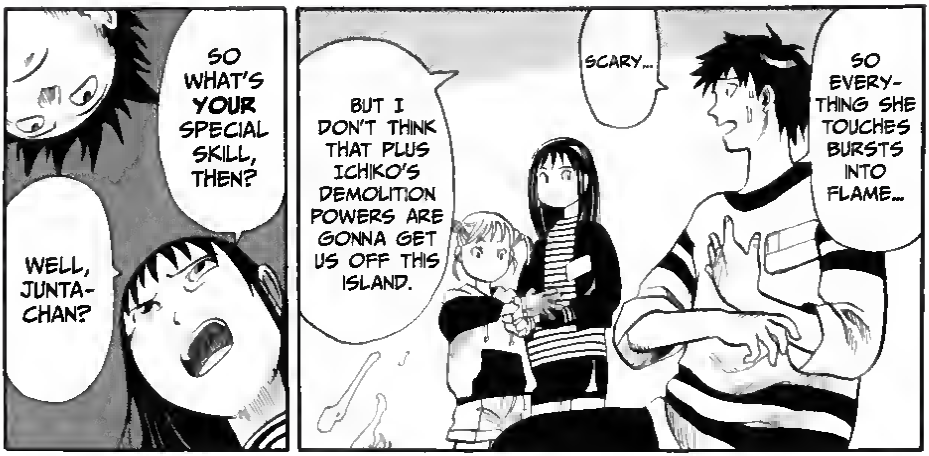

...SEEMS WE'RE THE ONLY ONES LEFT.
.....
HOW DID IT GET SO LATE?!
WHAT ?!
AH!

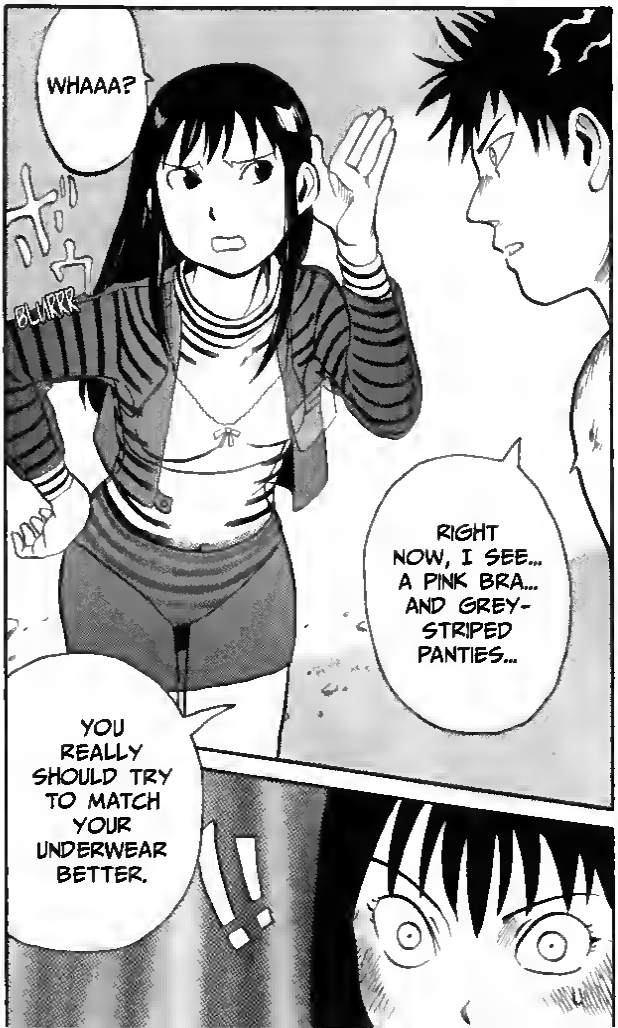
MY NAME IS ICHIKO HIGUCHI. DON'T CALL ME "KUCHI."
WHAT?!
JUNTA TAKAMI, YOU'RE COMING WITH US
DID YOU GET KIDNAPPED AND DRAGGED HERE TOO, KUCHI?
ICHIKO-CHAN, RIGHT?


HUH? YOU TOO, SUMI-CHAN?
NOD コクン
WOW, MY OWN DAUGHTER ?!
ACTUALLY, I WAS SCOUTED.

BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO US NOW?
SPLISH SPLASH ザザーン
IF YOU SAY SO...
AW, MAN, YOU GUYS GOT THE CUSHY TREATMENT.

OH! SAY...
WHAT SKILL DO YOU HAVE, SUMI-CHAN?
AFTER ALL, WE'RE PSYCHICS!!
DON'T WORRY, WE'LL GET BY SOME-HOW!
UGH... MY HEAD...
WHOOSH!
YAAAA-AAHHH!!
HUH? SHE'S PUT ON HER GOGGLES AND TAKEN OFF A GLOVE...
TUG
AND NOW SHE'S GRAB-BING A PIECE OF WOOD...

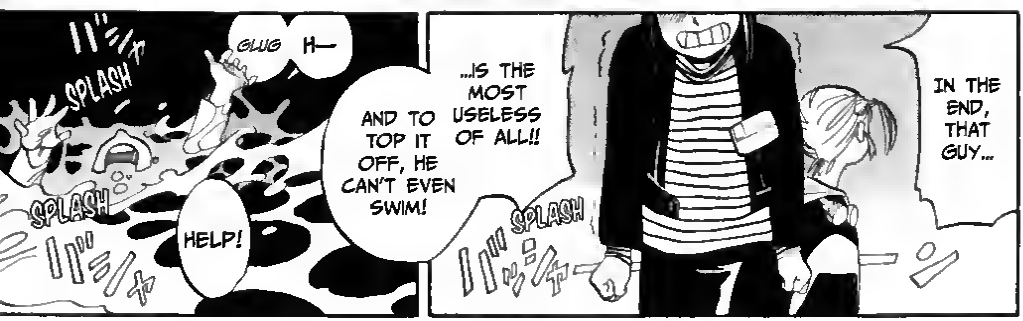

SO WHAT'S YOUR SPECIAL SKILL, THEN?
WELL, JUNTA-CHAN?
BUT I DON'T THINK THAT PLUS ICHIKO'S DEMOLITION POWERS ARE GONNA GET US OFF THIS ISLAND.
SCARY...
SO EVERY-THING SHE TOUCHES BURSTS INTO FLAME...

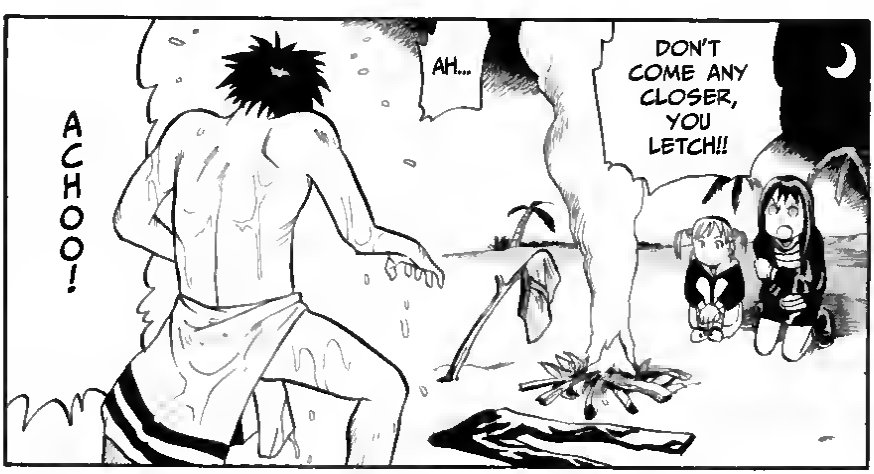

WHAAA?
BLURRR
RIGHT NOW, I SEE... A PINK BRA... AND GREY-STRIPED PANTIES...
YOU REALLY SHOULD TRY TO MATCH YOUR UNDERWEAR BETTER.
!!

CLAIR-VOY-ANCE.

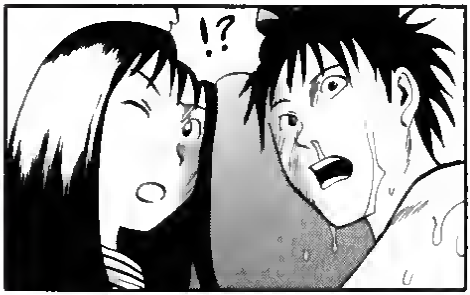
OHO?
CLAIRVOY-ANCE?
SO, YOU CAN SEE INTO THE FUTURE?

BUT YOU WEREN'T GETTING IT!!
グフッ
WHAM
I DIDN'T NEED A DEMONSTRATION TO GET THAT!!


SPLASH
GLUG
H—
HELP!
AND TO TOP IT OFF, HE CAN'T EVEN SWIM!
...IS THE MOST USELESS OF ALL!!
SPLASH
IN THE END, THAT GUY...


ACHOO!
AH...
DON'T COME ANY CLOSER, YOU LETCH!!

JUST BE GLAD I DIDN'T KILL YOU, YOU SICKO!!
THAT'S RICH, COMING FROM A VIOLENT CHICK WHO JUST FLUNG ME INTO THE OCEAN!!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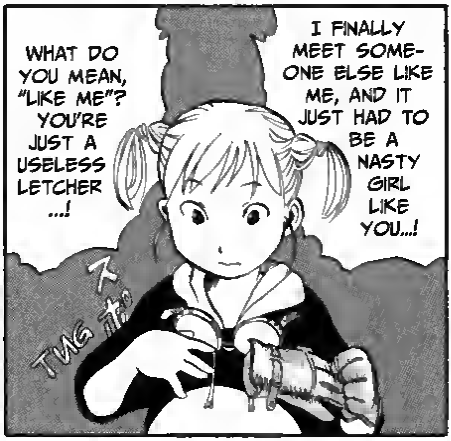
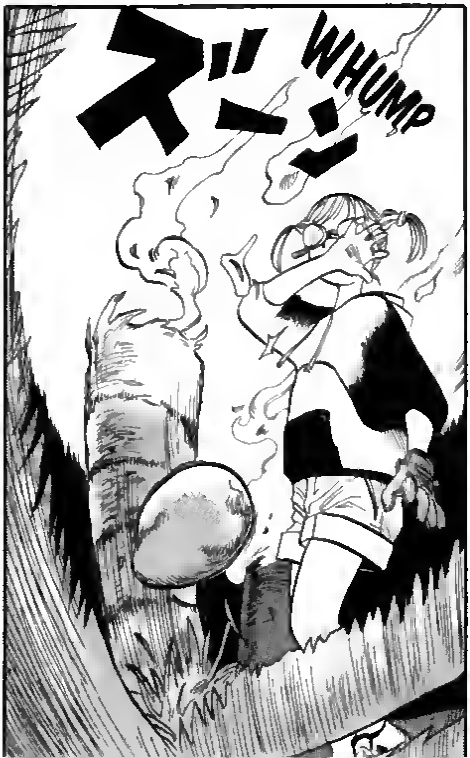
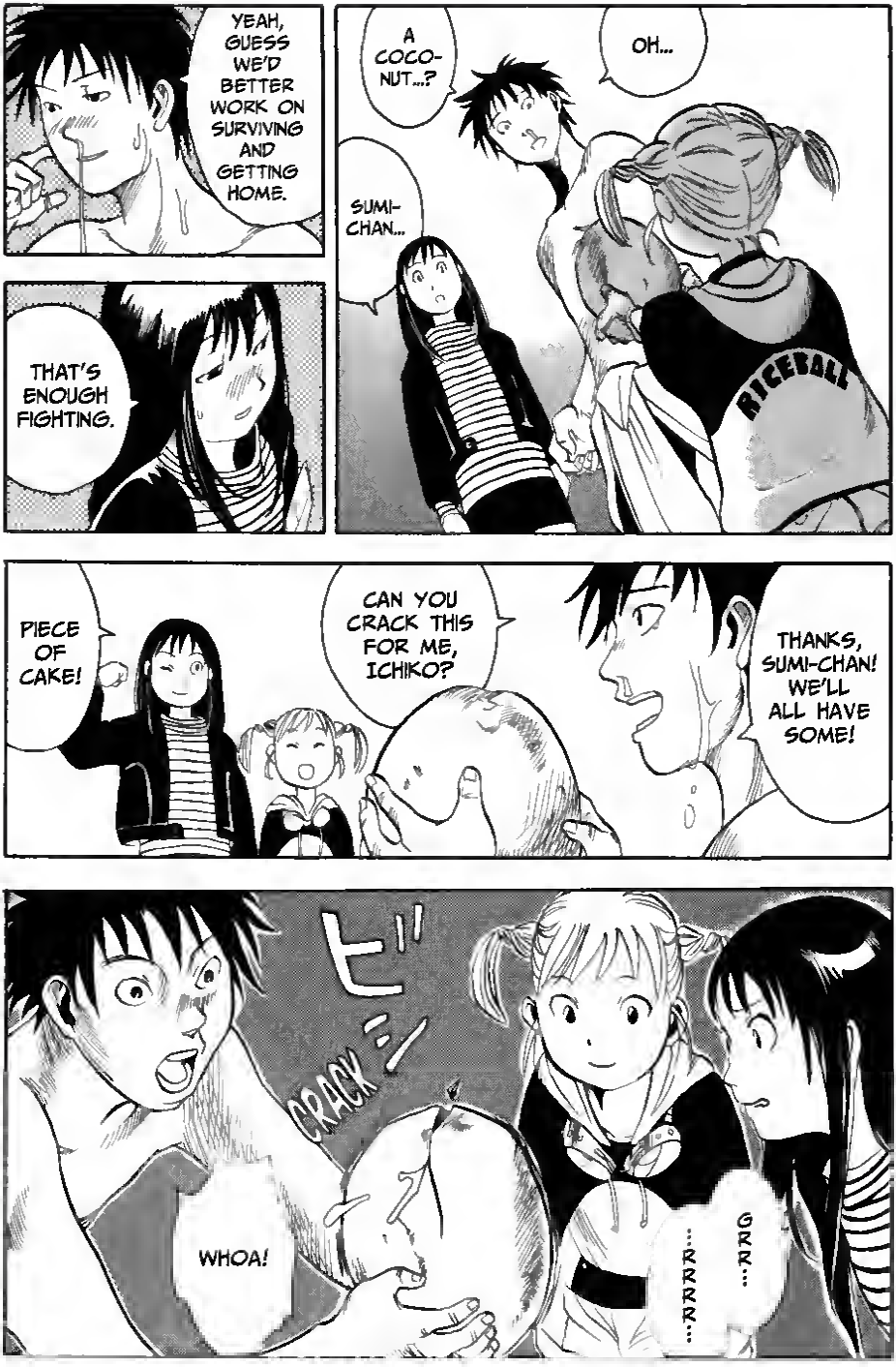

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "LIKE ME"? YOU'RE JUST A USELESS LETCHER ...!
I FINALLY MEET SOME-ONE ELSE LIKE ME, AND IT JUST HAD TO BE A NASTY GIRL LIKE YOU...!
TUG

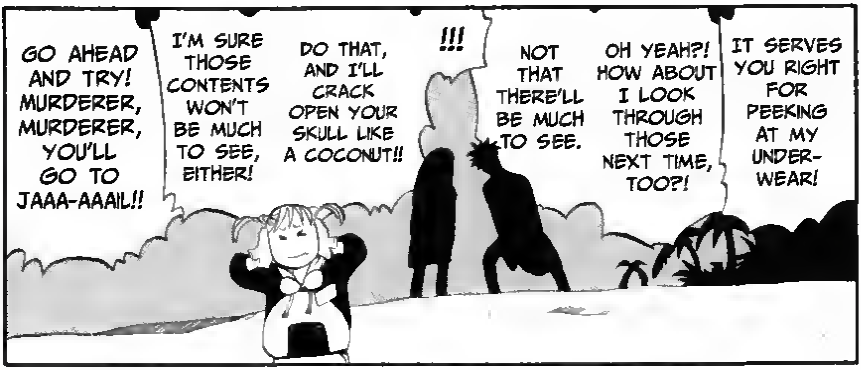

WHUMP
ズーン

WHOOSH!


YEAH, GUESS WE'D BETTER WORK ON SURVIVING AND GETTING HOME.
A COCO-NUT...?
OH...
SUMI-CHAN...
RICEBALL
THAT'S ENOUGH FIGHTING.
PIECE OF CAKE!
CAN YOU CRACK THIS FOR ME, ICHIKO?
THANKS, SUMI-CHAN! WE'LL ALL HAVE SOME!
CRACK
WHOA!
GNN...
...NNNN...

UH?
POW
NAH, IT'S FINE.
HEH.
AW, SORRY, DID THAT HURT?
OW!
TRY SOME FINESSE NEXT TIME, YOU SAVAGE!!
カン
BAM
OF COURSE IT HURT!! HOW WAS THAT A "PIECE OF CAKE"? MORE LIKE PIECES OF SHRAPNEL!

BIG DEAL! I COULD'VE DUCKED THAT ROCK EASILY!! BESIDES, THEN YOU WENT AND HURLED ME INTO THE OCEAN. WHAT'S IT GONNA BE NEXT TIME?! WHAT ARE YOU, A WALKING LAND MINE?!
IS THAT ANY WAY TO TREAT THE PERSON WHO SAVED YOUR LIFE?! YOU'D BE DEAD IF I HADN'T BROKEN THAT ROCK! WHY DID I HAVE TO SAVE SOMEBODY LIKE YOU?!

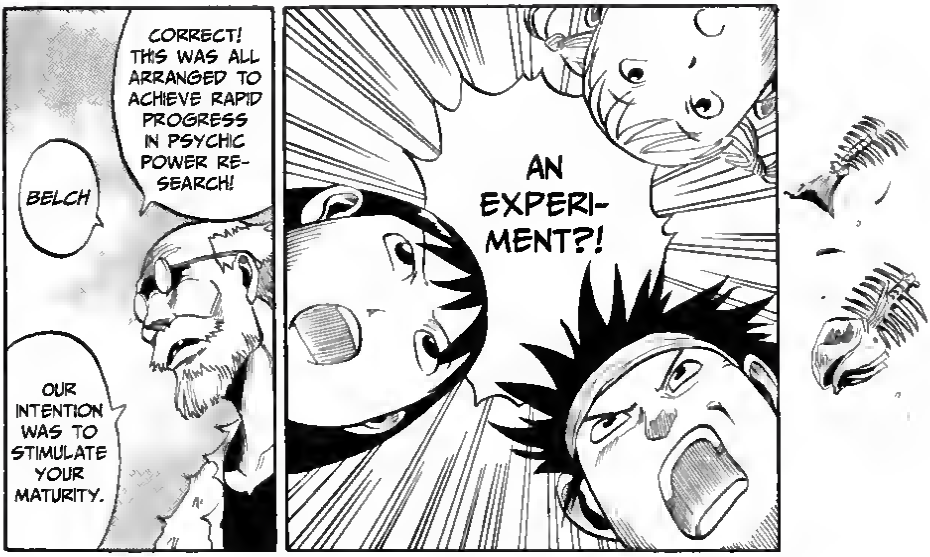

GO AHEAD AND TRY! MURDERER, MURDERER, YOU'LL GO TO JAAA-AAAIL!!
I'M SURE THOSE CONTENTS WON'T BE MUCH TO SEE, EITHER!
DO THAT, AND I'LL CRACK OPEN YOUR SKULL LIKE A COCONUT!!
!!!
NOT THAT THERE'LL BE MUCH TO SEE.
OH YEAH?! HOW ABOUT I LOOK THROUGH THOSE NEXT TIME, TOO?!
IT SERVES YOU RIGHT FOR PEEKING AT MY UNDER-WEAR!

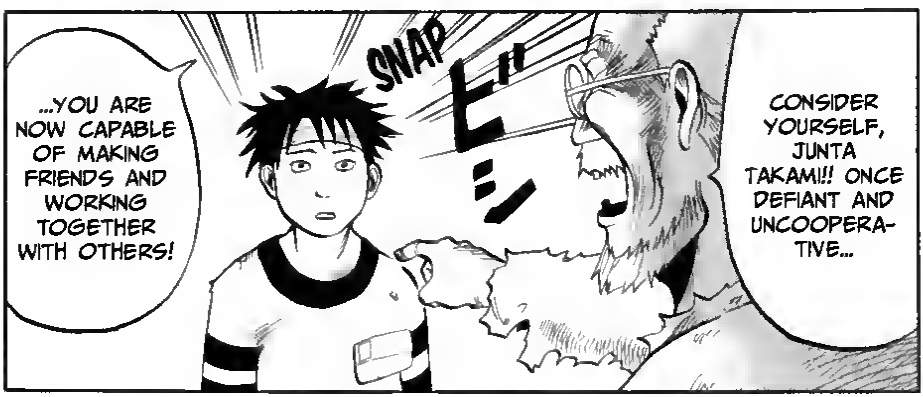
RUSTLE
.....!!
GROWLLL...
.....!!

FSSH
I SEE SOME!
THEY'RE RIGHT AT YOUR FEET, ICHIKO!
SPLOOSH
YAAAAAAH!

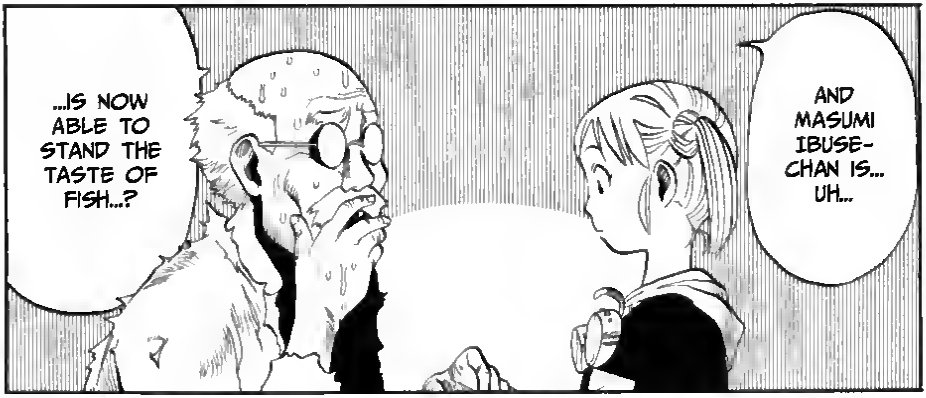
ブスブス
SSSSSSSSSS
YAY!
IF WE CAN KEEP THIS UP, WE'LL DO JUST FINE FOR SOME TIME.
FOR A MOMENT THERE, I DIDN'T THINK WE'D EVER MOVE PAST THE FIGHTING... PEOPLE REALLY SHOW THEIR TRUE FEELINGS WHEN THEY'RE HUNGRY.
WHAT HAVE WE HERE? A TIGER? A BEAR? THAT'S SOME GOOD EATING. ICHIKO!
COMIN' RIGHT UP!
RUSTLE
グルルル!!!
GROWLLL...

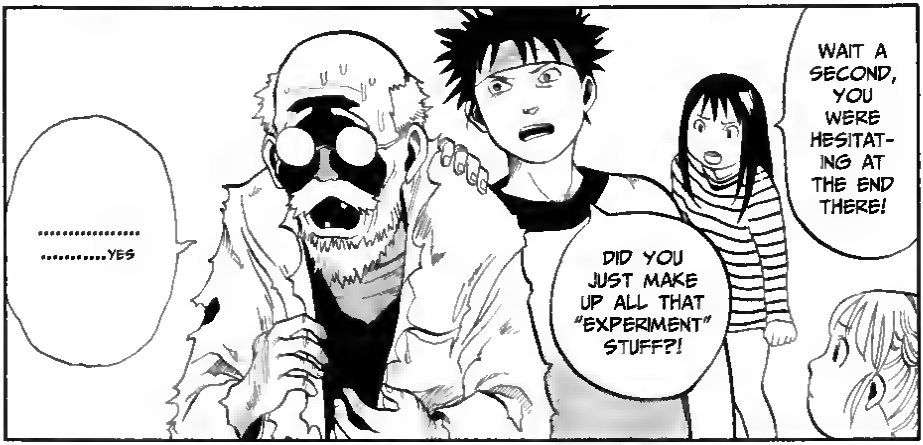
YOU'RE THAT...!!
...DOC-TOR!
WHAT SPLENDID PROG-RESS!
EXCEL-LENT!
パチ CLAP
パチ CLAP
パチ CLAP
パチ CLAP
HEY!
JUST WHAT'RE YOU...
YOU ACTU-ALLY SUR-VIVED!!
FINE, FINE... BUT MAY I HAVE SOME OF THAT FISH FIRST...?
GROWLLL... GURGLE

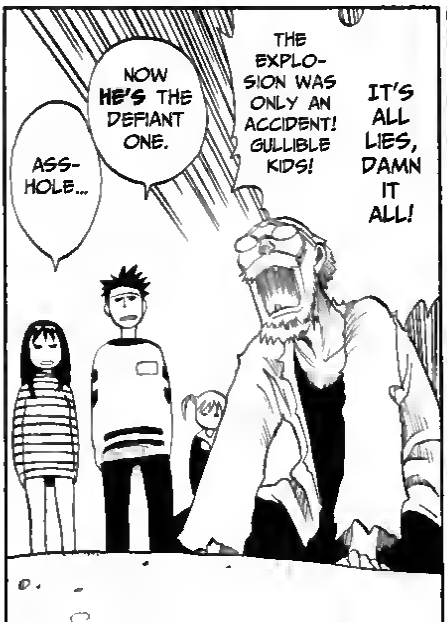

CORRECT! THIS WAS ALL ARRANGED TO ACHIEVE RAPID PROGRESS IN PSYCHIC POWER RESEARCH!
BELCH
OUR INTENTION WAS TO STIMULATE YOUR MATURITY.
AN EXPERIMENT?!


...YOU ARE NOW CAPABLE OF MAKING FRIENDS AND WORKING TOGETHER WITH OTHERS!
SNAP
CONSIDER YOURSELF, JUNTA TAKAMI!! ONCE DEFIANT AND UNCOOPERATIVE...

...YOU HAVE NOW BEGUN TO ATTAIN CONTROL OVER YOUR POWERS!
AND YOU, ICHIKO HIGUCHI!! HAVING CONQUERED YOUR WILLFULNESS AND LACK OF FOCUS...


...IS NOW ABLE TO STAND THE TASTE OF FISH...?
AND MASUMI IBUSE-CHAN IS... UH...


.....
.....YES
DID YOU JUST MAKE UP ALL THAT "EXPERIMENT" STUFF?!
WAIT A SECOND, YOU WERE HESITAT-ING AT THE END THERE!

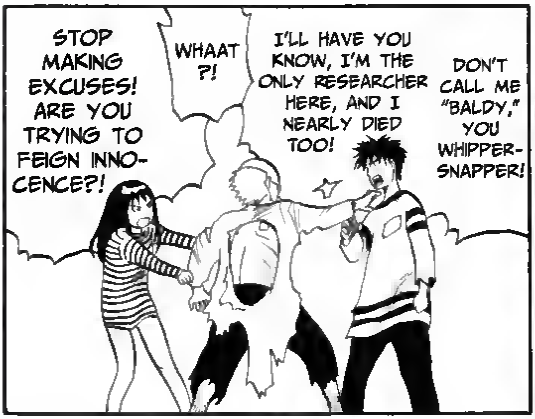

ASS-HOLE...
NOW **HE'S** THE DEFIANT ONE.
THE EXPLO-SION WAS ONLY AN ACCIDENT! GULLIBLE KIDS!
IT'S ALL LIES, DAMN IT ALL!

WHAT?
IT...

No.0001
樋口
ICHIKO
ICHIKO'S NAMETAG SAYS "NO. 0001"...
YEAH! NOT TO MEN-TION...
...THERE MUST'VE BEEN OTHER PSYCHICS HERE ON THE ISLAND.
THEN, IN THAT EXPLO-SION... ALL THOSE PEOPLE...
...THERE SHOULD BE AT LEAST THREE MORE OF US.
ANY WAY YOU SLICE IT...
UH...
No 0006
井伏 真澄
ASUMI IBUSE
AND SUMI-CHAN'S SAYS "NO. 0006."
MINE SAYS "NO. 0005"...
OH, CRAP!
SO YOU ADMIT THERE WERE TWO OTHERS?!
WE SKIPPED THAT ONE!
THE NUMBER FOUR'S UNLUCKY, REMEM-BER?

THE JAPANESE WORD FOR FOUR CAN BE PRONOUNCED "SHI," WHICH SOUNDS LIKE THE WORD FOR DEATH.

INNOCENT PEOPLE ENDED UP LOSING THEIR LIVES TODAY...
...ALL BECAUSE OF YOU SCIEN-TISTS!

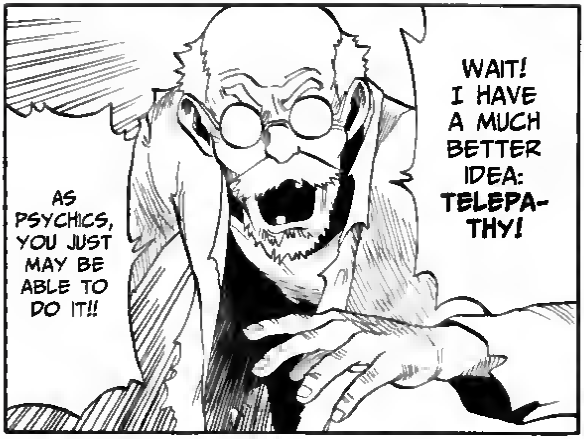

STOP MAKING EXCUSES! ARE YOU TRYING TO FEIGN INNO-CENCE?!
WHAAT ?!
I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW, I'M THE ONLY RESEARCHER HERE, AND I NEARLY DIED TOO!
DON'T CALL ME "BALDY," YOU WHIPPER-SNAPPER!

BALDY ?!
HOW'RE YOU GONNA ATONE FOR THAT...
HOW AWFUL ...

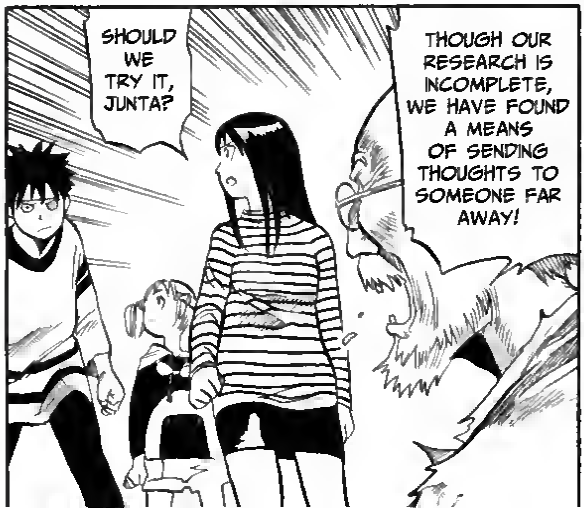
STOP IT!

DON'T...
DON'T FIGHT...
ガク SHUDDER
SNATCH
YUNTA TAKAMI
THAT'S JUST...
DASH
DASH
DASH
...BULL...
...OF...
...A LOAD...

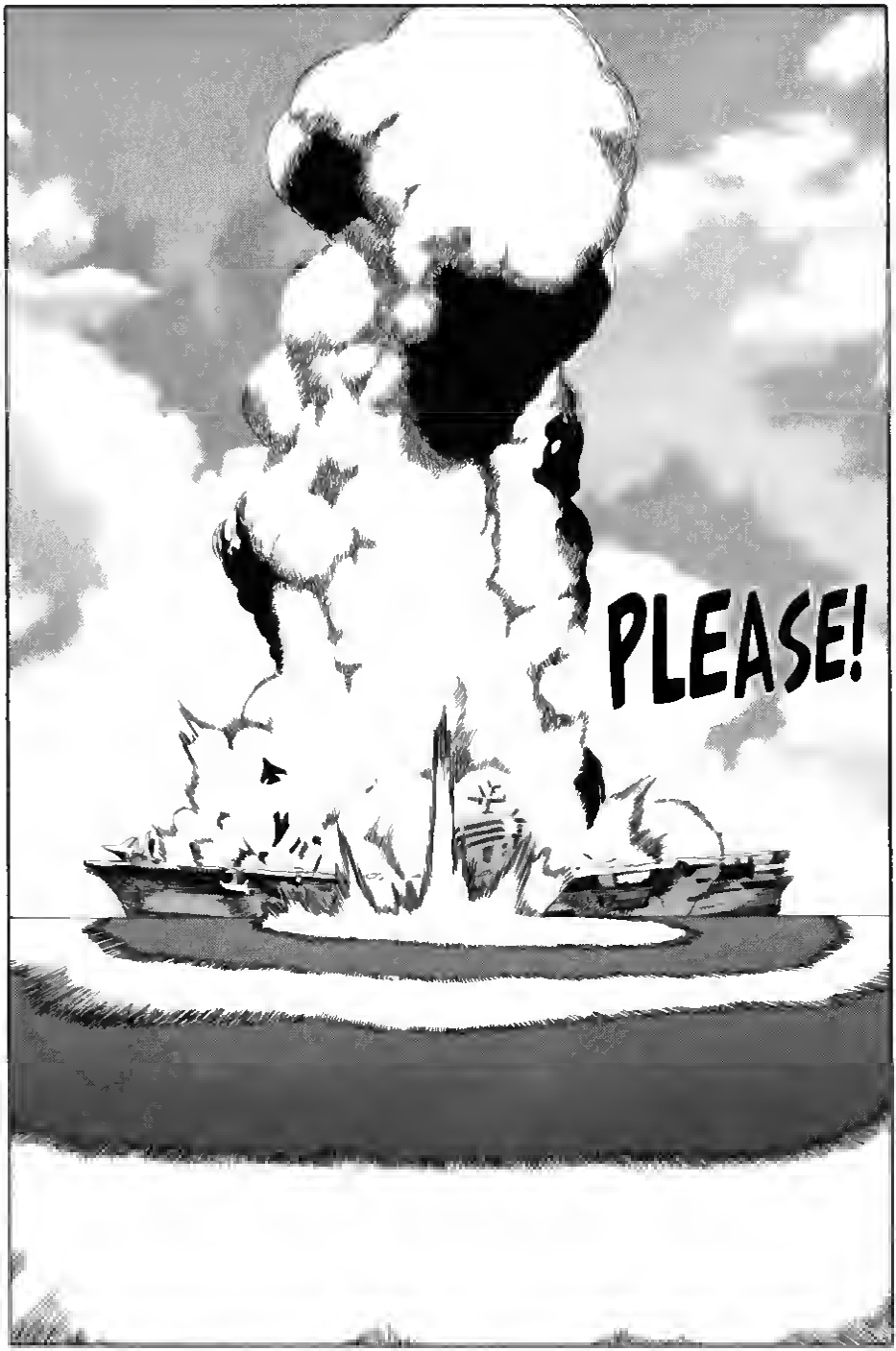
A SHIP?!
SHIP!
...SH...

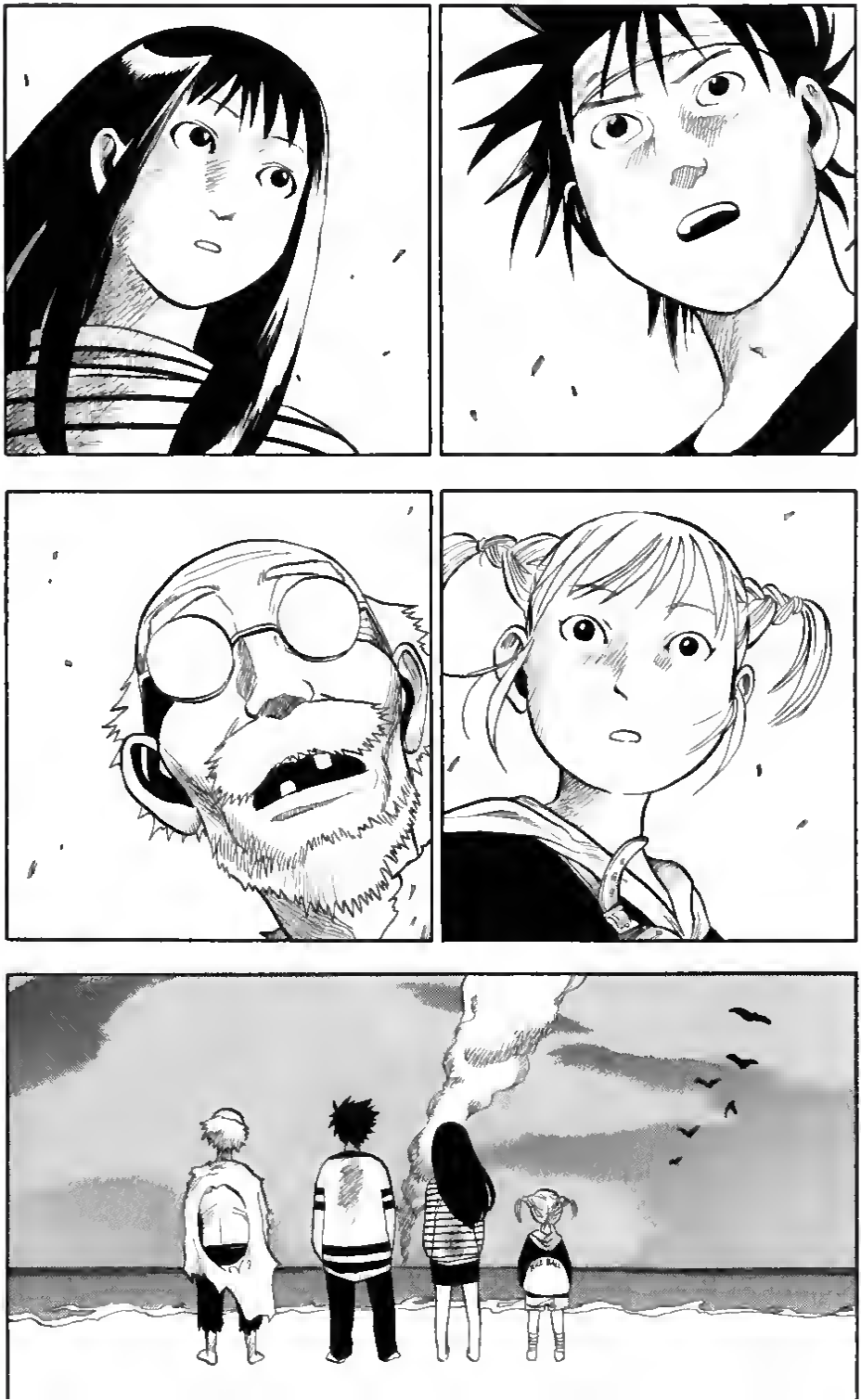

WAIT! I HAVE A MUCH BETTER IDEA: TELEPA-THY!
AS PSYCHICS, YOU JUST MAY BE ABLE TO DO IT!!

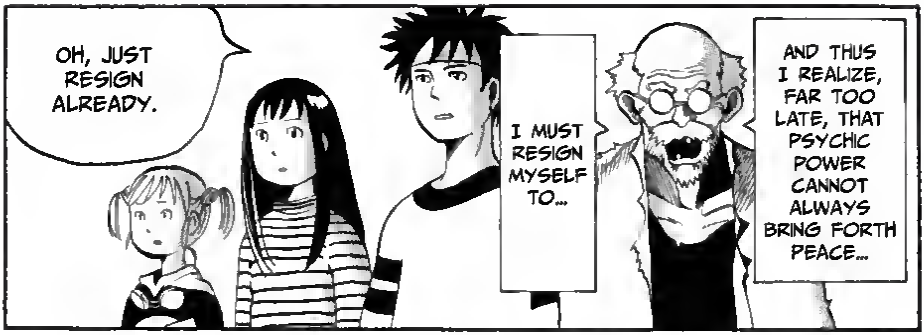
HEEEY!
WE'RE OVER HERE! THIS WAY!
WAVE
WAVE
STOP WAVING MY SKIRT!! THEY CAN'T SEE THAT! SEND UP A FLARE INSTEAD!!

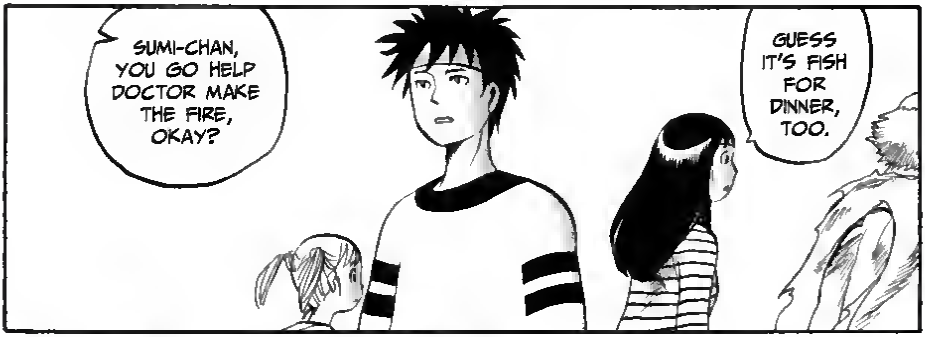

SHOULD WE TRY IT, JUNTA?
THOUGH OUR RESEARCH IS INCOMPLETE, WE HAVE FOUND A MEANS OF SENDING THOUGHTS TO SOMEONE FAR AWAY!

...AND FOCUS AS HARD AS YOU CAN.
GOOD! NOW, BRING YOUR MINDS TOGETHER...
OF COURSE WE SHOULD!
WE'RE PSYCHICS, AREN'T WE?!
US
SAVE
AND
COME


PLEASE!

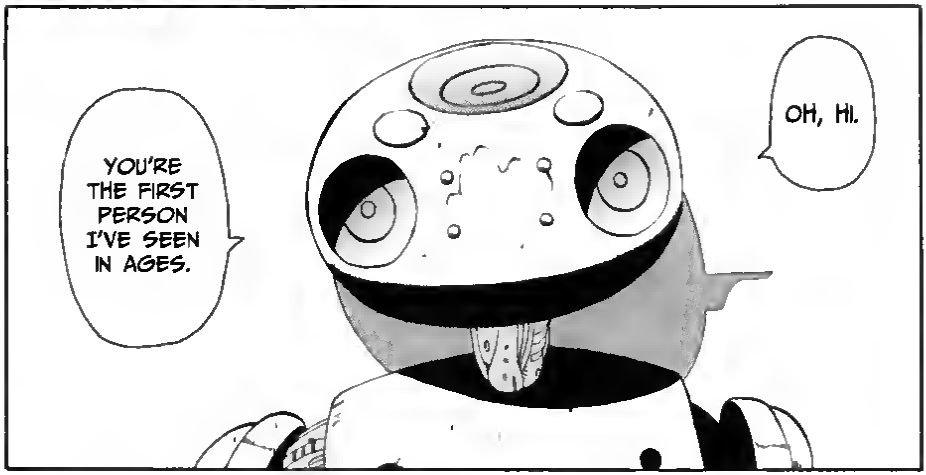



OH, JUST RESIGN ALREADY.
I MUST RESIGN MYSELF TO...
AND THUS I REALIZE, FAR TOO LATE, THAT PSYCHIC POWER CANNOT ALWAYS BRING FORTH PEACE...



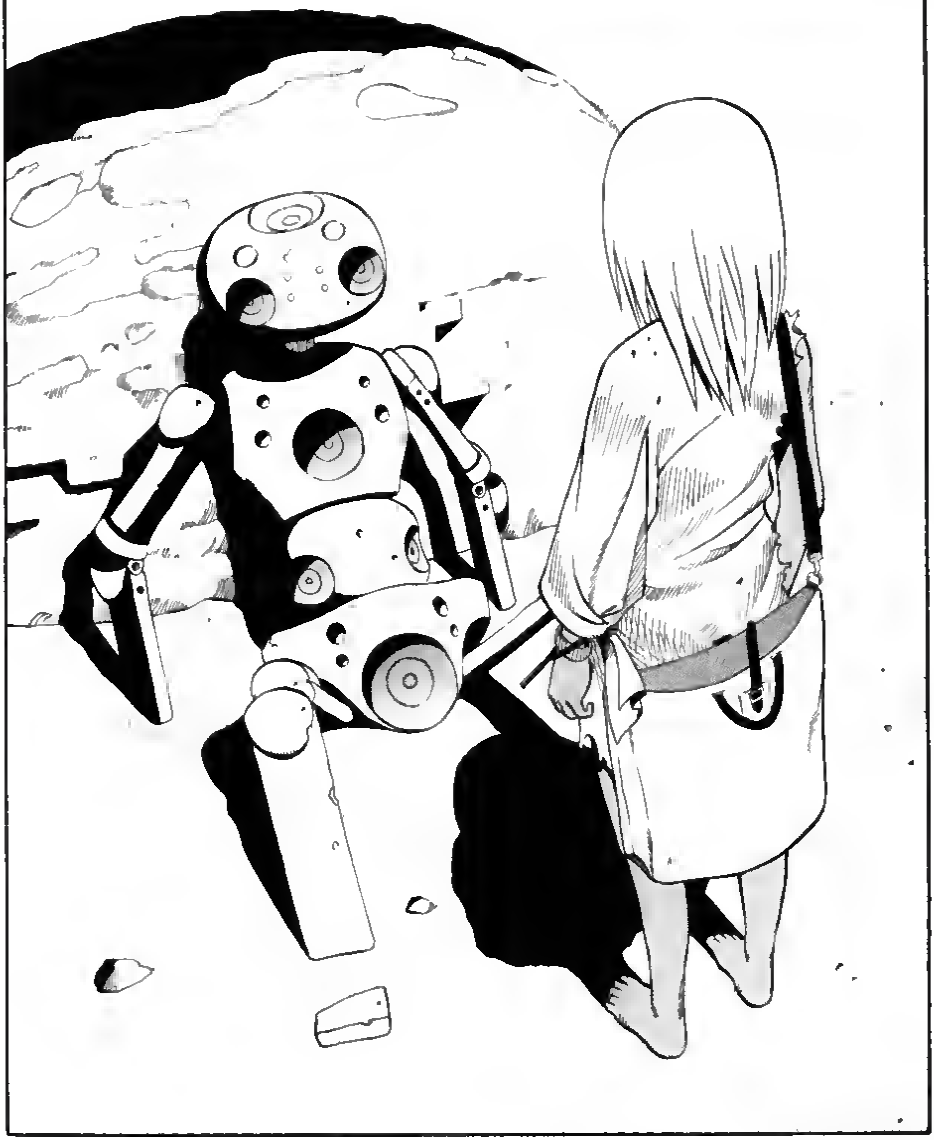
♦ Forward, Teen Psychic Squad! / END ♦

Present for me

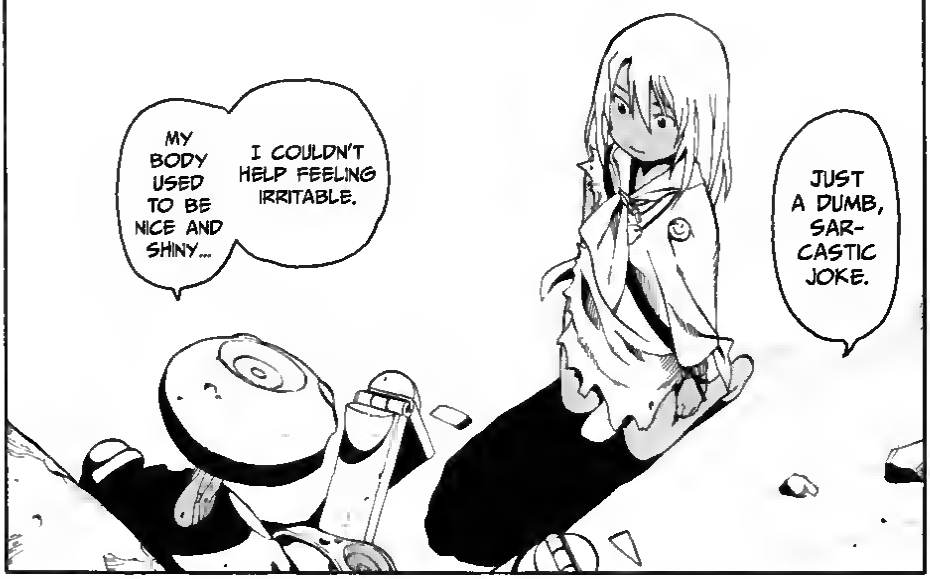

OH, HI.
YOU'RE THE FIRST PERSON I'VE SEEN IN AGES.

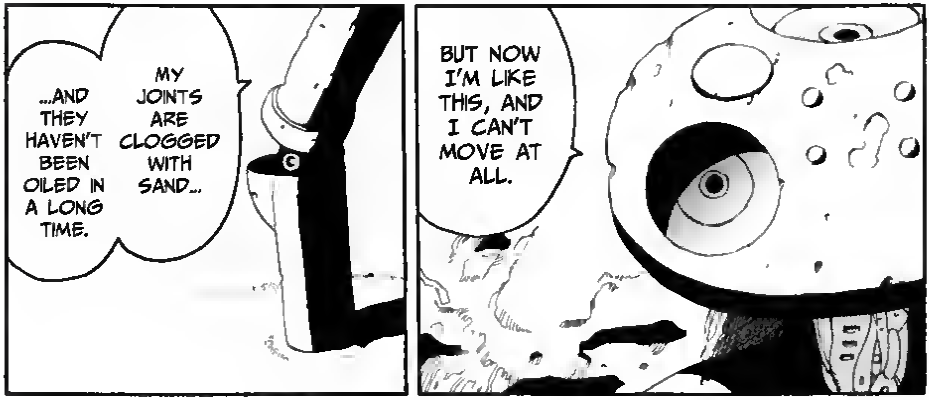
OF COURSE, I'M MACHINE, AND YOU'RE HUMAN.
SO, TO BE SPECIFIC...
YOU'RE THE FIRST HUMAN BEING I'VE SEEN IN A VERY LONG TIME.

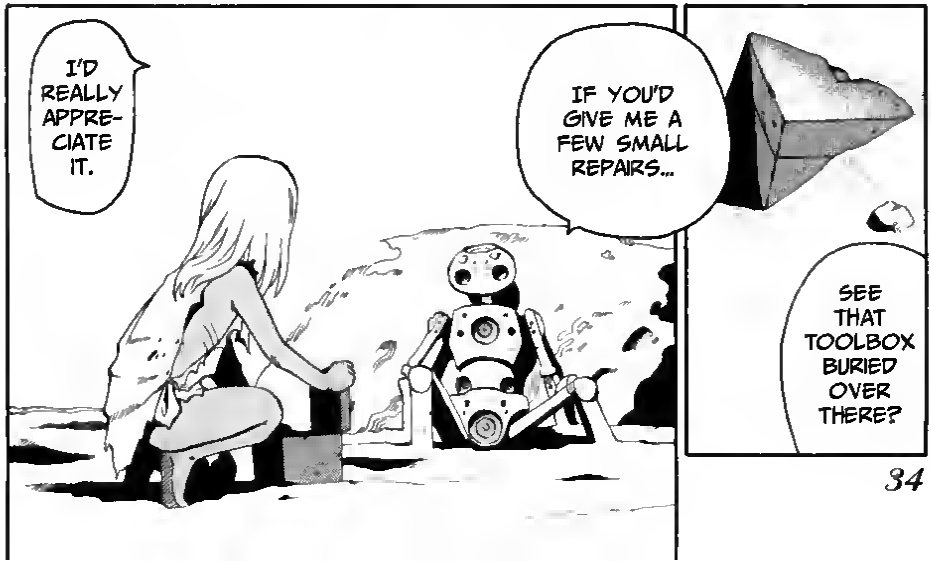
PRESENT FOR ME

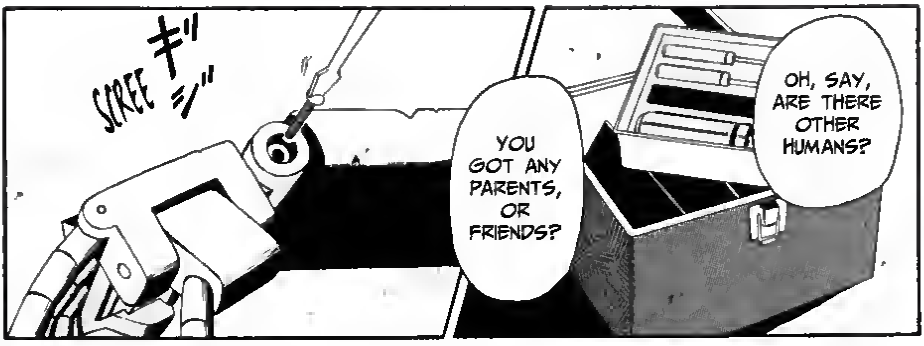


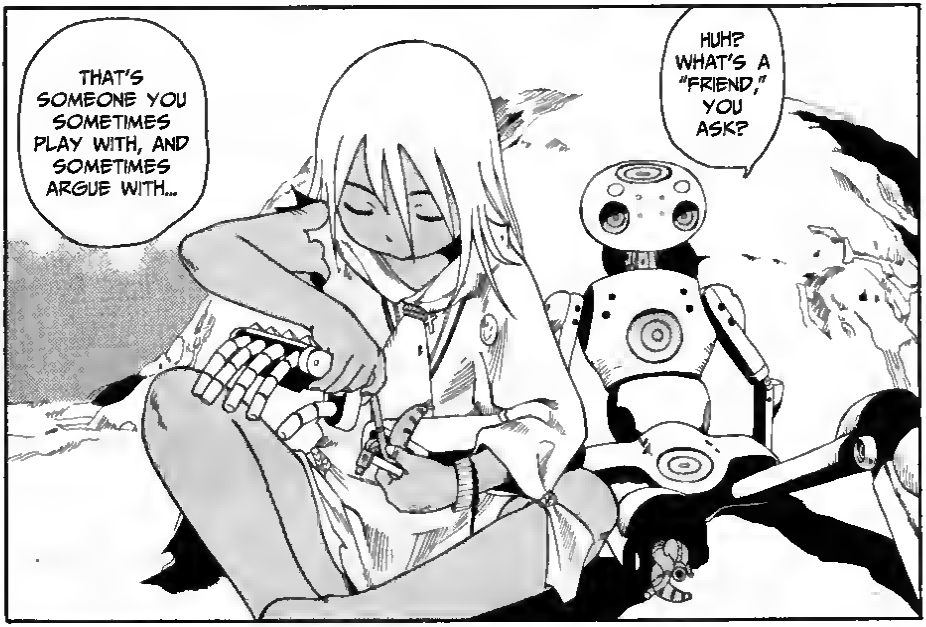
SO YOU'RE WONDERING WHAT I'M DOING HERE?
DOING FINE, JUST KICKING BACK AGAINST THIS COMFY ROCK...
CATCHING A FEW RAYS...
OH. WAIT!
I DIDN'T MEAN TO SAY THAT.
SORRY.

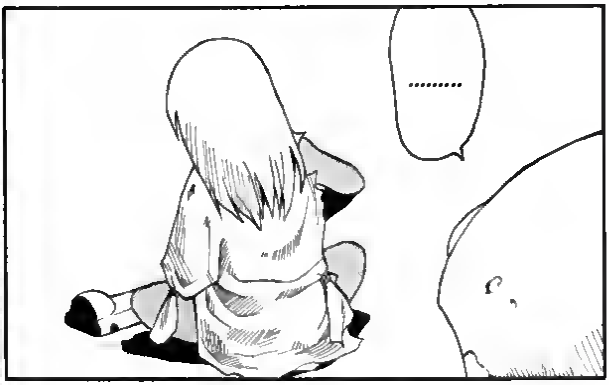

MY BODY USED TO BE NICE AND SHINY...
I COULDN'T HELP FEELING IRRITABLE.
JUST A DUMB, SARCASTIC JOKE.


...AND THEY HAVEN'T BEEN OILED IN A LONG TIME.
MY JOINTS ARE CLOGGED WITH SAND...
BUT NOW I'M LIKE THIS, AND I CAN'T MOVE AT ALL.


I'D REALLY APPRECIATE IT.
IF YOU'D GIVE ME A FEW SMALL REPAIRS...
SEE THAT TOOLBOX BURIED OVER THERE?


SCREE
OH, SAY, ARE THERE OTHER HUMANS?
YOU GOT ANY PARENTS, OR FRIENDS?


HUH? WHAT'S A "FRIEND," YOU ASK?
THAT'S SOMEONE YOU SOMETIMES PLAY WITH, AND SOMETIMES ARGUE WITH...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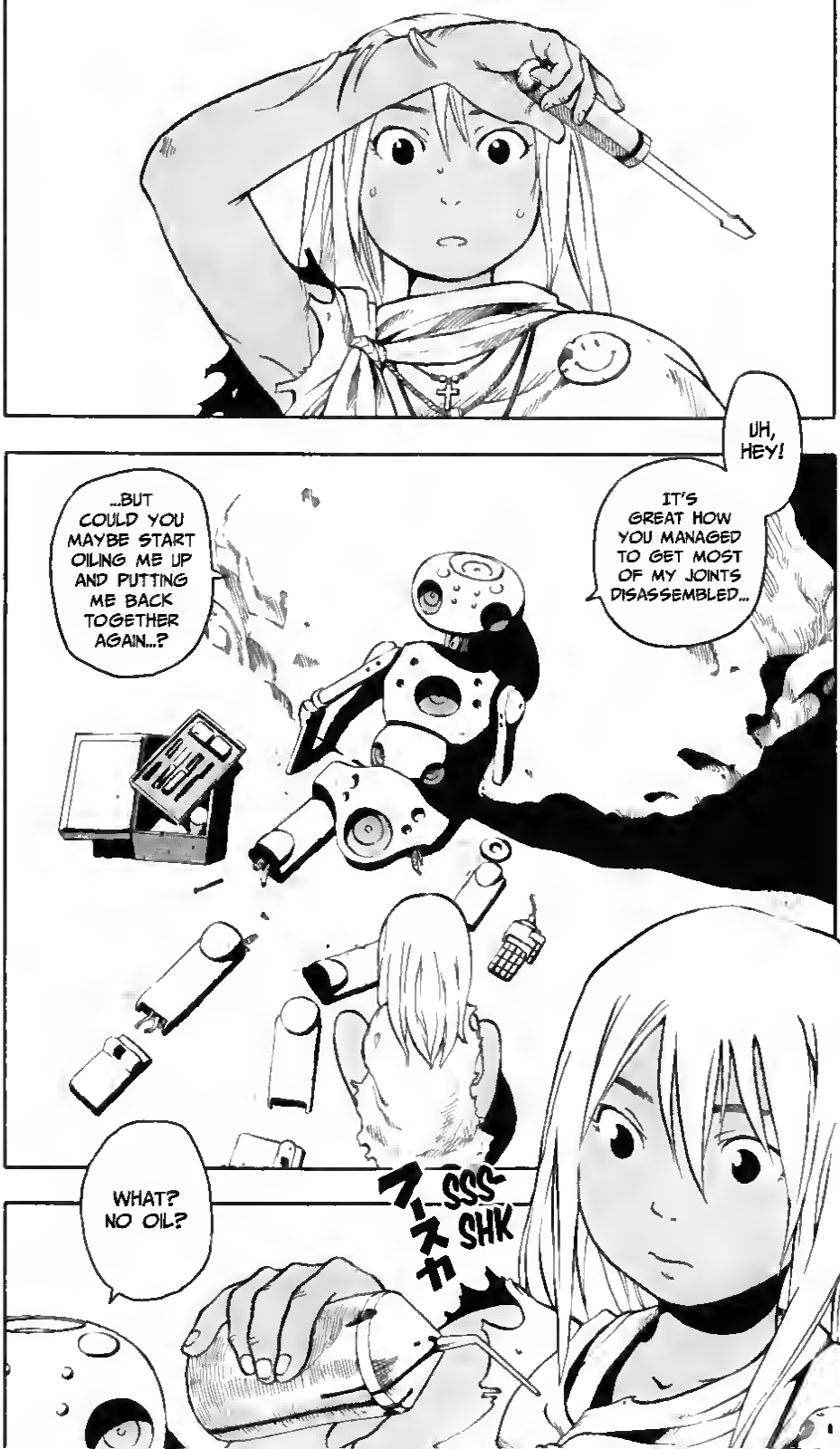
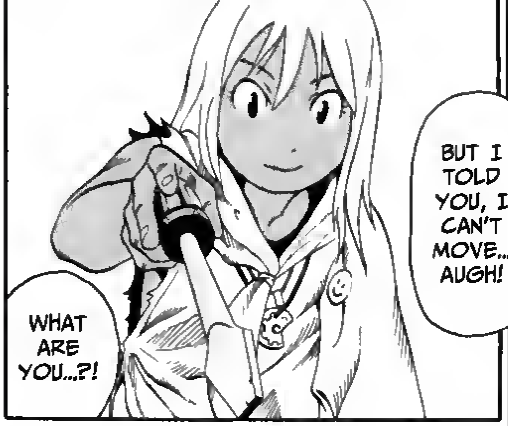
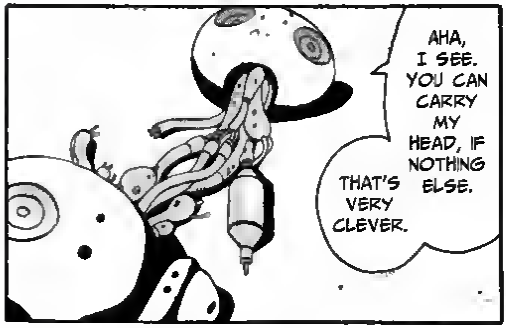
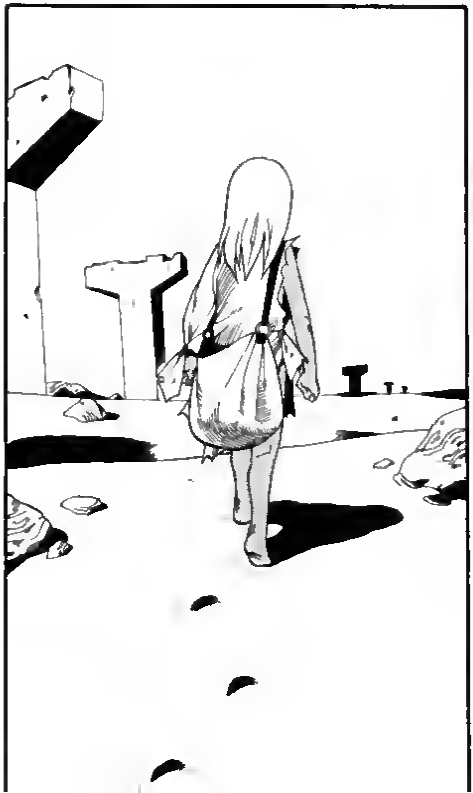

UH, HEY!
IT'S GREAT HOW YOU MANAGED TO GET MOST OF MY JOINTS DISASSEMBLED...
...BUT COULD YOU MAYBE START OILING ME UP AND PUTTING ME BACK TOGETHER AGAIN...?
WHAT? NO OIL?
SSS-
SHK
フースカ

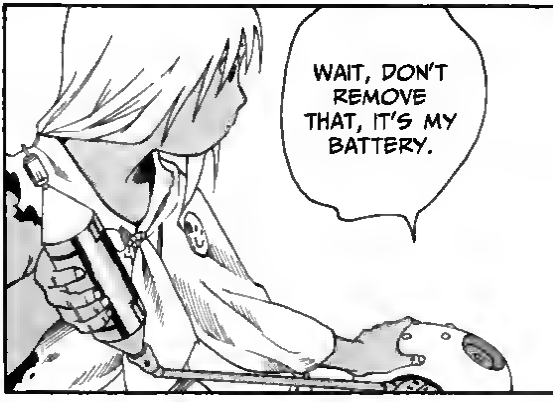
...THERE SHOULD BE SOME AT MY HOME, IF IT'S STILL INTACT.
YOU'LL GO GET IT FOR ME? THAT'S VERY KIND OF YOU, BUT...
EVEN WITH ADULT LEGS, IT'D TAKE YOU FIVE DAYS TO GET THERE ON FOOT...
DO YOU HAVE A CAR...?
...PROBABLY NOT, CONSIDERING YOU DON'T KNOW THAT WORD. AND EVEN IF YOU DID, IT'D BE IMPOSSIBLE TO DRIVE IN THIS TERRAIN.
WELL, IT'S PRIMITIVE, BUT HOW ABOUT AN ANIMAL?
LIKE MAYBE AN ELEPHANT, OR A CAMEL...

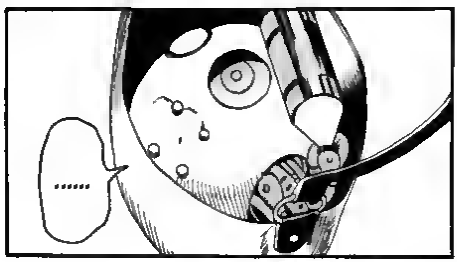

WHAT ARE YOU...?!
BUT I TOLD YOU, I CAN'T MOVE... AUGH!
YOU WANT ME TO SEE IT, TOO?

YOU'VE SEEN A CAMEL ?!


AHA, I SEE. YOU CAN CARRY MY HEAD, IF NOTHING ELSE.
THAT'S VERY CLEVER.

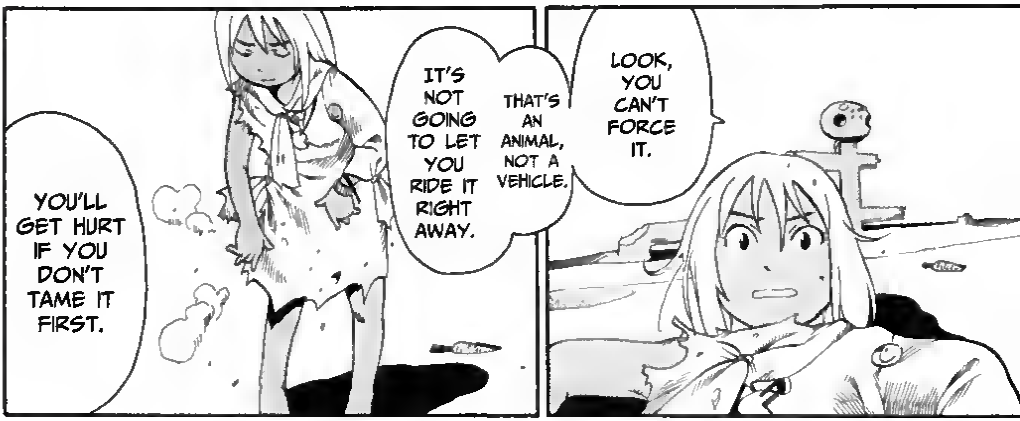


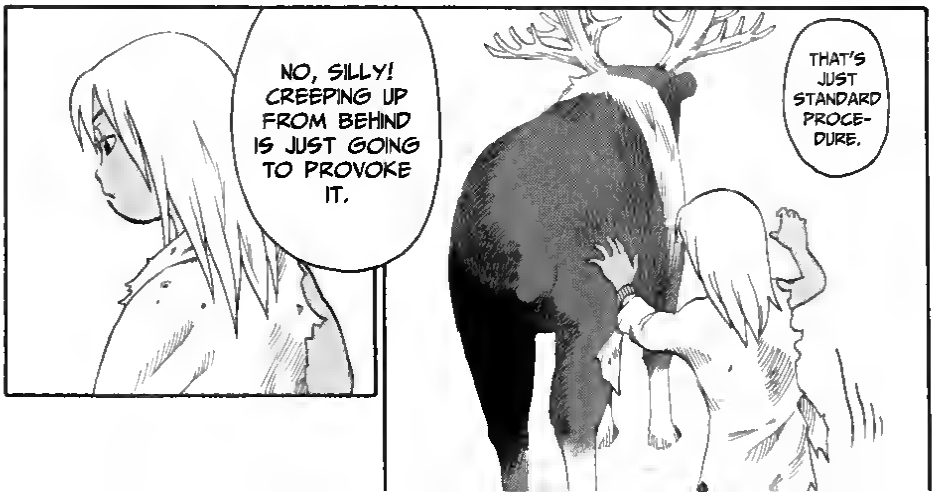

WAIT, DON'T REMOVE THAT, IT'S MY BATTERY.


.....

EH, IT'LL DO.
ACTUALLY, THAT'S A REINDEER, NOT A CAMEL...
SNORT

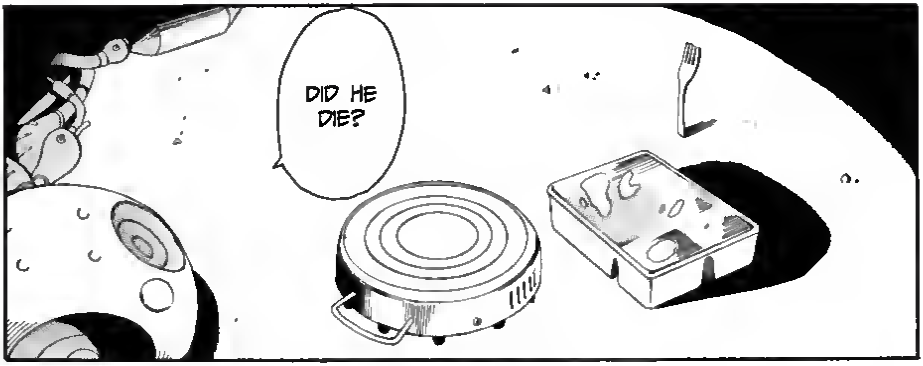
OH, FOR...
ドン
WHUMP
ギュ
TUG

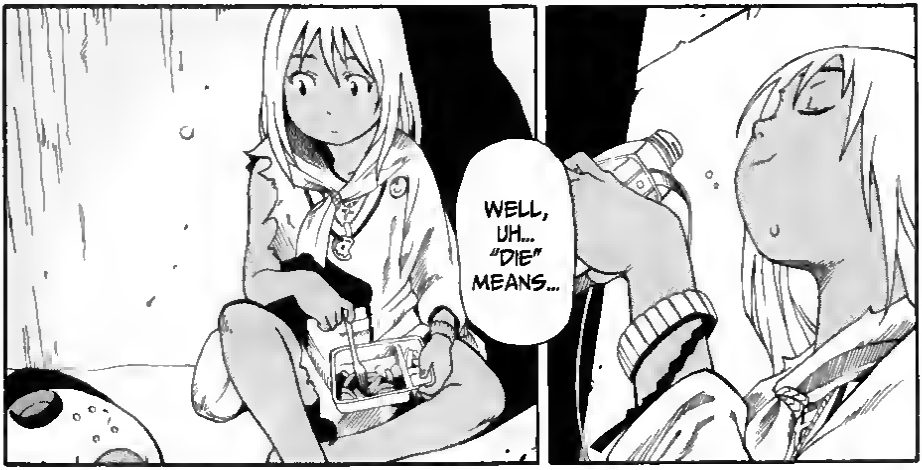

YOU'LL GET HURT IF YOU DON'T TAME IT FIRST.
IT'S NOT GOING TO LET YOU RIDE IT RIGHT AWAY.
THAT'S AN ANIMAL, NOT A VEHICLE.
LOOK, YOU CAN'T FORCE IT.


NO, SILLY! CREEPING UP FROM BEHIND IS JUST GOING TO PROVOKE IT.
THAT'S JUST STANDARD PROCE-DURE.

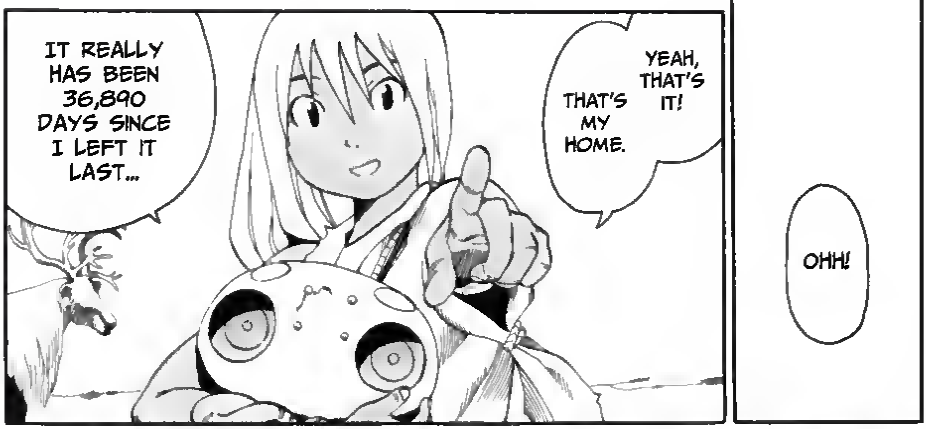
HUH?!
HMM?
WHAT?
ガシ
BAM
.....

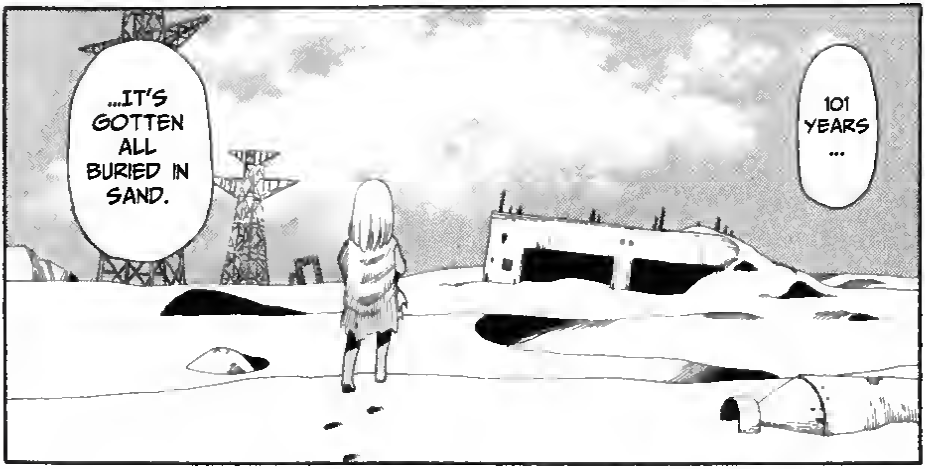
THESE STONE POSTS WILL LEAD YOU TO MY HOUSE.
THESE POSTS USED TO SUPPORT A HIGHWAY, LONG AGO.
IT'S WAAAY DOWN AT THE OTHER END.
AND THAT MAN'S WATCH, WHAT HAPPENED TO ITS OWNER?
I SEE ALL SORTS OF THINGS HANGING AROUND YOUR NECK. THAT RING MUST BE TOO LARGE FOR YOU.

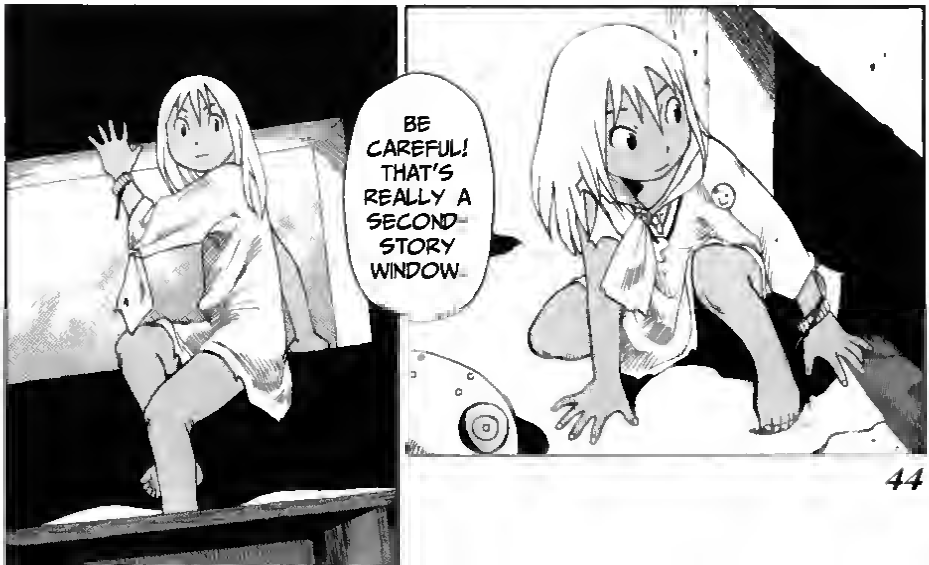

DID HE DIE?


WELL, UH... "DIE" MEANS...

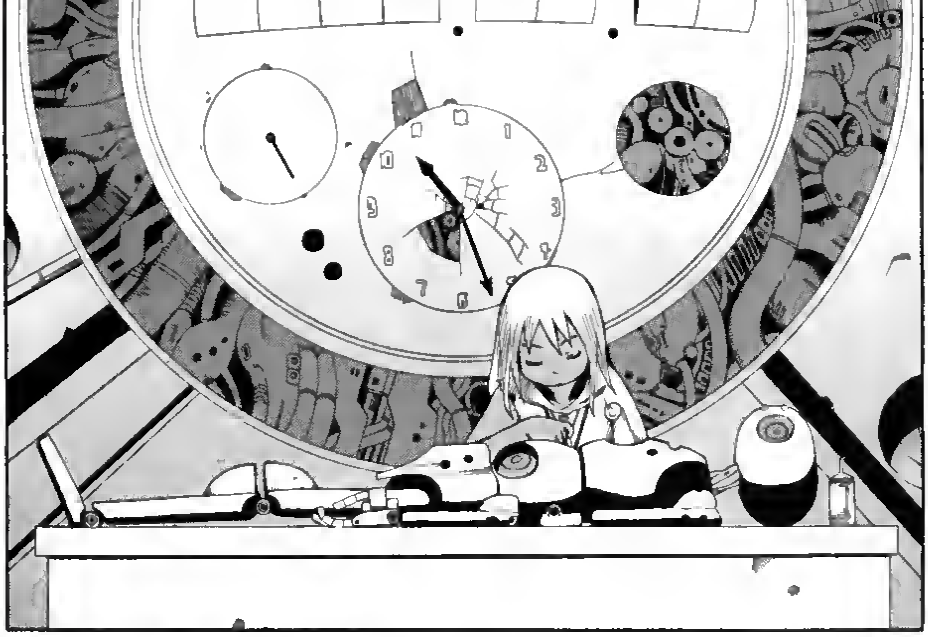
...THEY DON'T RUN ANY-MORE.

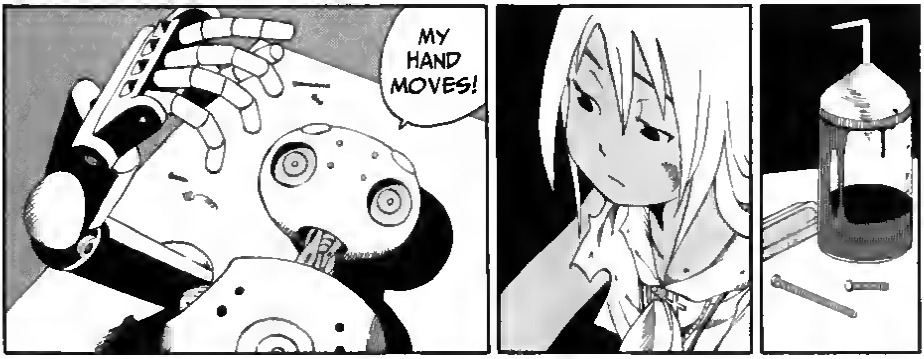

IT REALLY HAS BEEN 36,890 DAYS SINCE I LEFT IT LAST...
THAT'S MY HOME.
YEAH, THAT'S IT!
OHH!

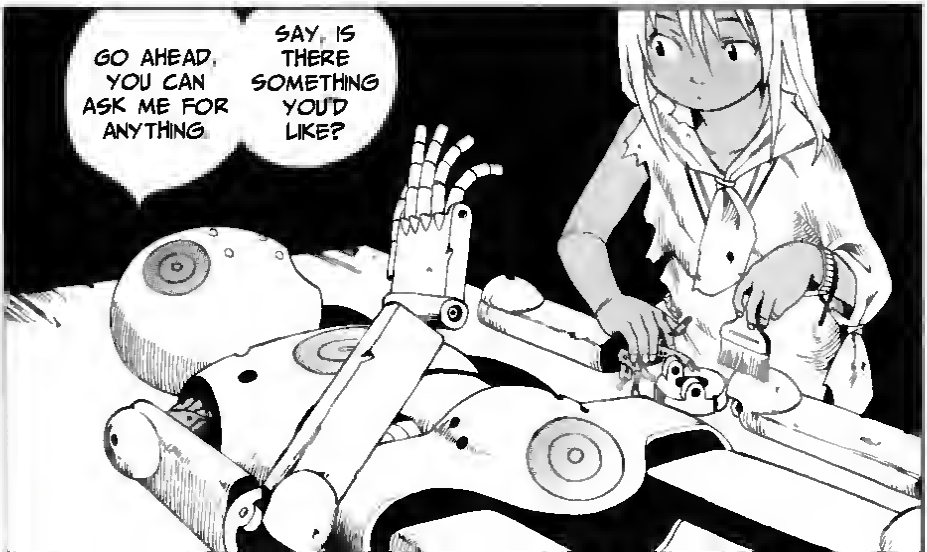

...IT'S GOTTEN ALL BURIED IN SAND.
101 YEARS ...

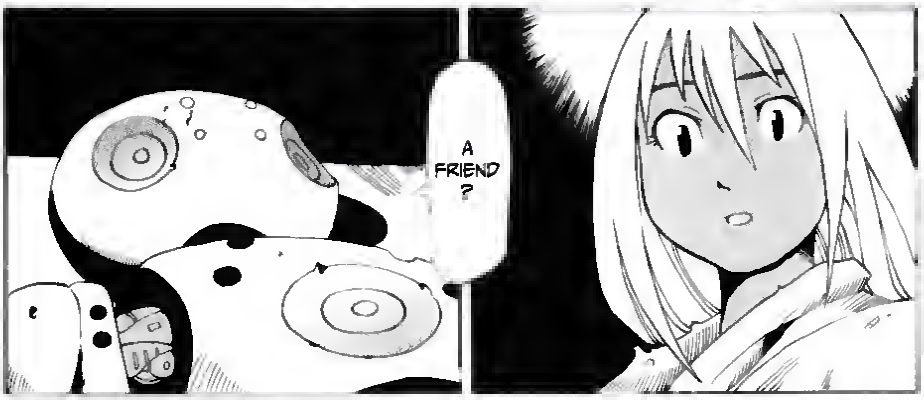

BE CAREFUL! THAT'S REALLY A SECOND-STORY WINDOW.

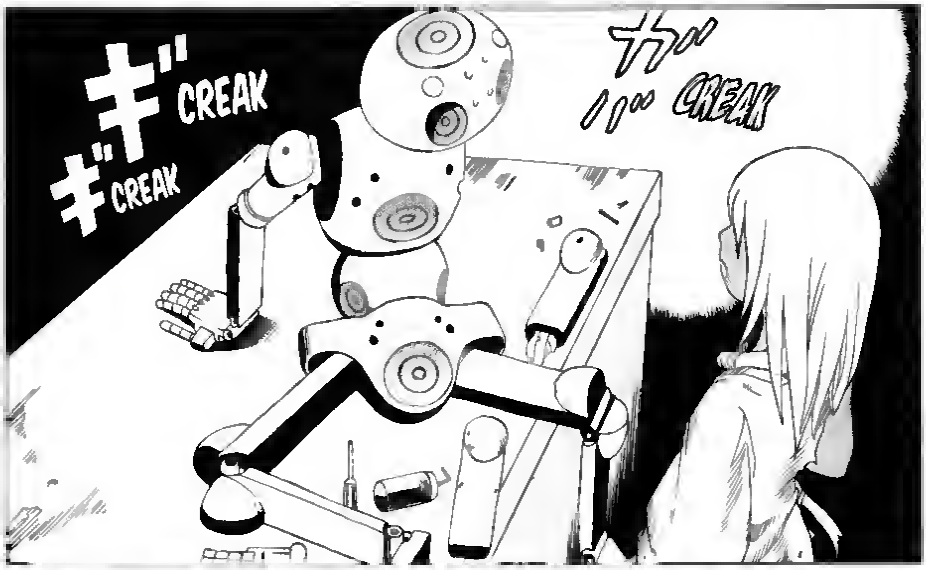
バリ
CRACK
カン
BONK
ボスッ
FWUMP
HEEEY! YOU OKAY IN THERE? I HEARD A REALLY LOUD SCREAM.

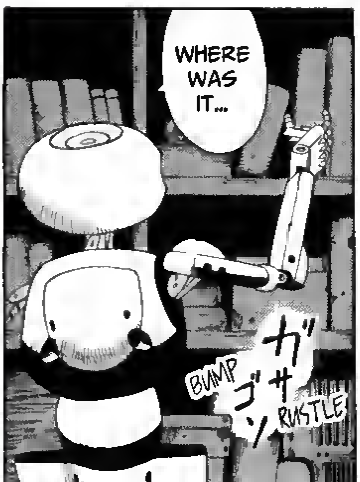


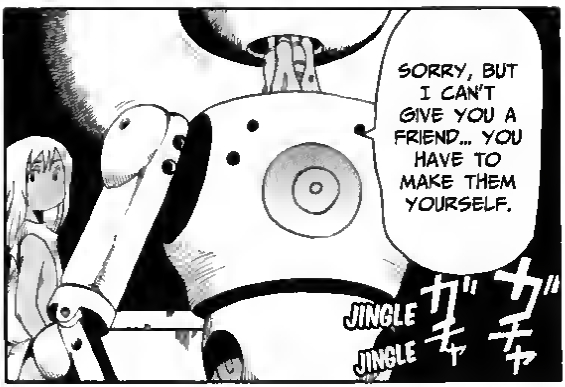

MY HAND MOVES!


GO AHEAD, YOU CAN ASK ME FOR ANYTHING
SAY, IS THERE SOMETHING YOU'D LIKE?


A FRIEND ?

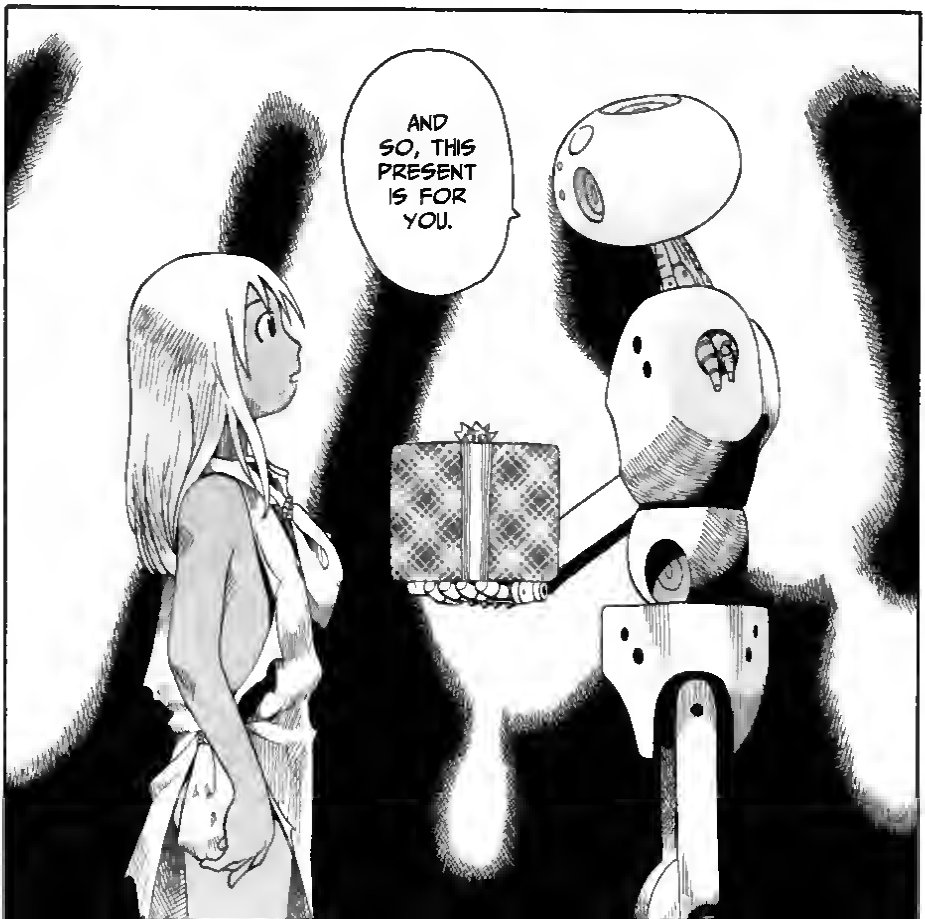

ギ" CREAK
ギ" CREAK


WHERE WAS IT...
BUMP
ガサゴソ RUSTLE

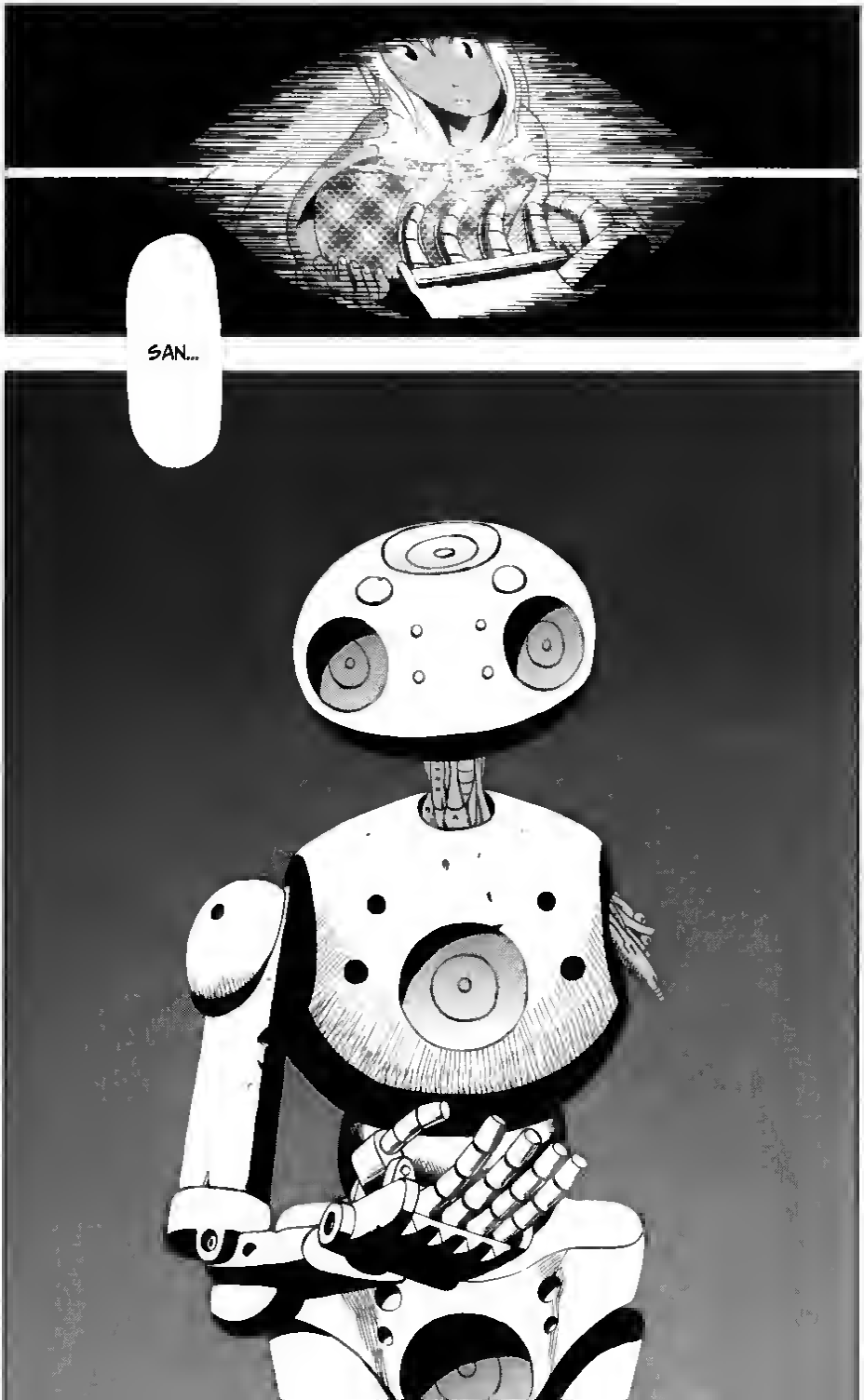

SORRY, BUT I CAN'T GIVE YOU A FRIEND... YOU HAVE TO MAKE THEM YOURSELF.
JINGLE
JINGLE
ガ" ガ" チャ チャ

TIME'S SHORT. I NEED TO HURRY.
EH? MY ARM? NO, I'M FINE WITH JUST THIS ONE.
...BEFORE MY BATTERY RUNS OUT.
THANKS TO YOU, I HAVE TIME FOR ONE LAST JOB...
HERE WE... ARE!
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
IT'S A MACHINE'S DUTY TO KEEP RUNNING FOR THE SAKE OF HUMANITY...

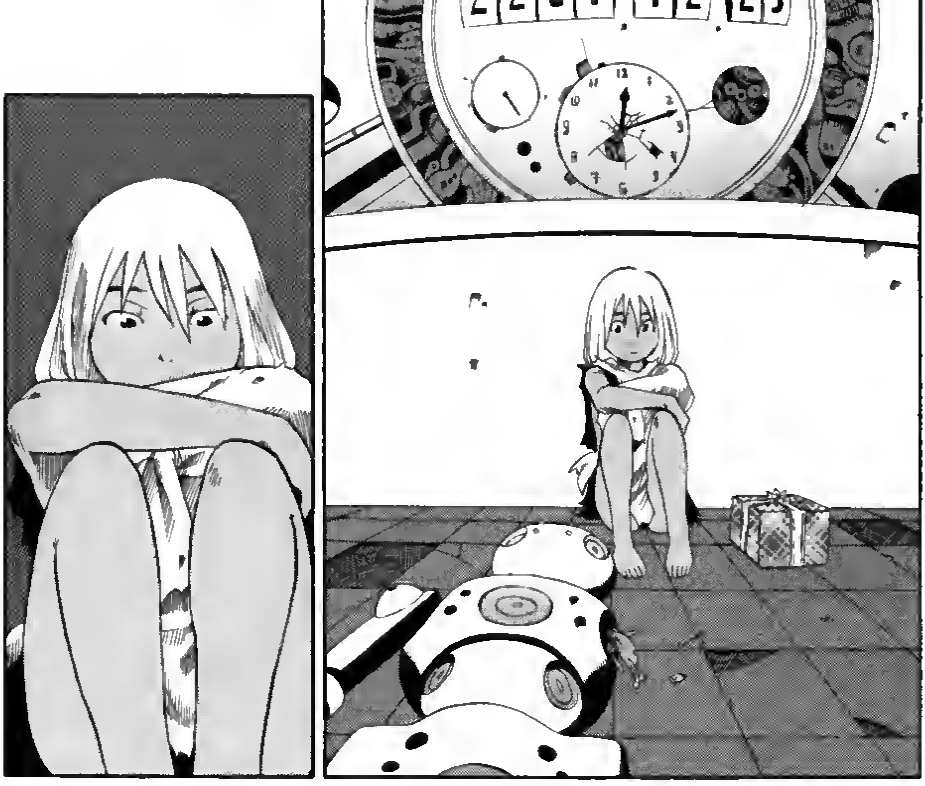
2201.12.24
EVERY YEAR, ON THIS DAY, IT WAS MY JOB TO DELIVER GIFTS TO CHILDREN.

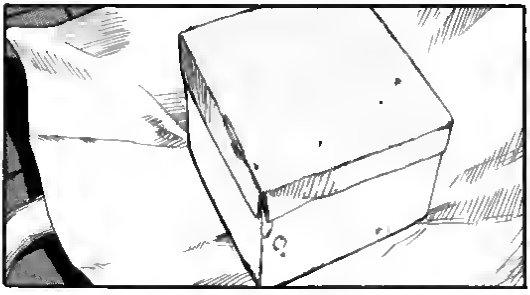

AND SO, THIS PRESENT IS FOR YOU.

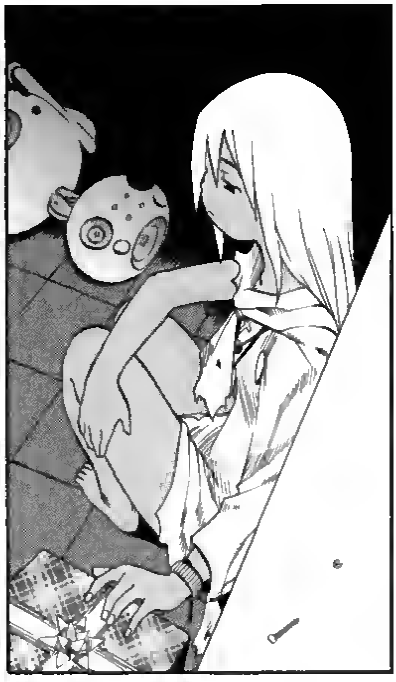
CLACK
カッ
2/2/0/1/1/2/2/5
カチコチ
TICK TOCK
12
11
10
SPEAKING OF WHICH, I NEVER DID ASK FOR YOUR NAME.
MINE IS...

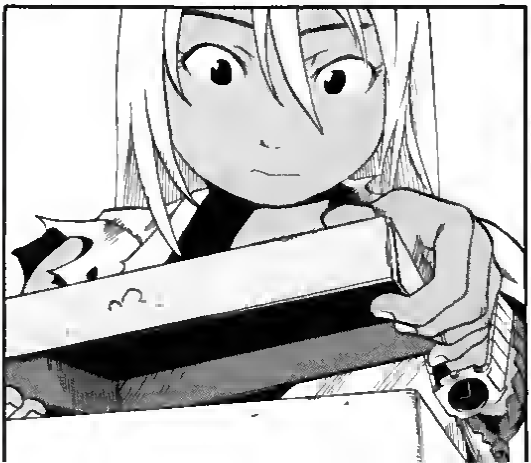

SAN...

ガッシャン
CLATTER









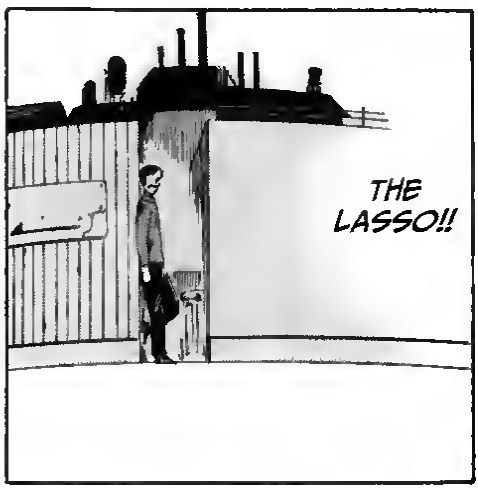
PAPER. -SANTA CLAUS- MODEL X-01 BLUEPRINT 2101 EDITION / CYLINDER. SIZE 2 MAGNUM BATTERY

♦ Present for Me / END ♦

LASSO MAN

THEY'LL PAY FOR THIS!!

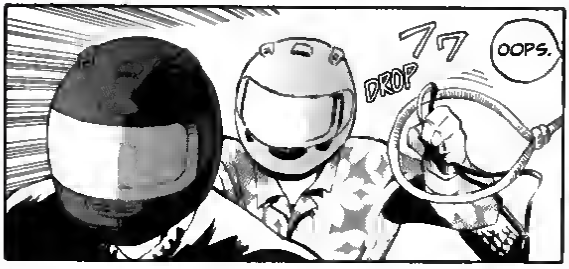
I WILL HAVE MY REVENGE! FIRST ON THE COMPANY THAT TOSSED ME ASIDE... AND THEN ON SOCIETY FOR ALLOWING CORPORATIONS TO DOWNSIZE!


THE LASSO!!

SINCE I WAS NEVER ANY GOOD AT SPINNING TOPS, YO-YOS, OR THE CUP-AND-BALL GAME, I SHALL USE THE ONE SKILL REMAINING TO ME—

HEH HEH HEH. LOOK AT THAT PALLET OF GOODS AWAITING SHIPMENT.
THERE'S MY FORMER COMPANY.
CLANK
I'LL SNATCH THOSE AWAY AND LAUGH AS THEIR PROFITS FALL!
CRACK
WHOOSH
WHOOSH
THIS IS A JOB FOR LASSO FIEND!
AFTER THAT, I'LL PROCEED TO TERRORIZE SOCIETY FROM THE SHADOWS.
THIEF!
HUH?
BUT I DIDN'T STEAL ANY-THING YET!

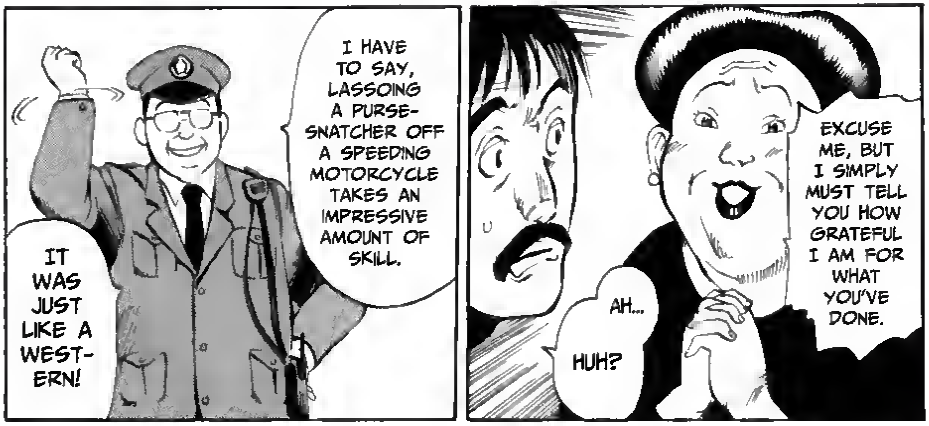
WHATEVER, IT AMOUNTS TO THE SAME THING.
HEY, WE'RE PURSE-SNATCHERS, NOT CON ARTISTS!
SOMEBODY HELP! I'VE BEEN RIPPED OFF!!
SCREECH

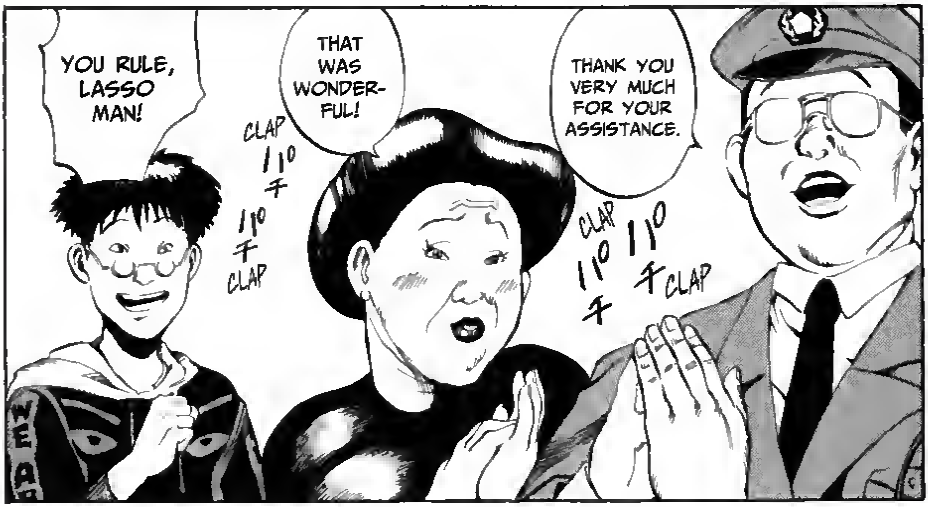

DROP
OOPS.

AUGH?!
SQUEEZE
JERK
GAH!

HUH, SO IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH ME.

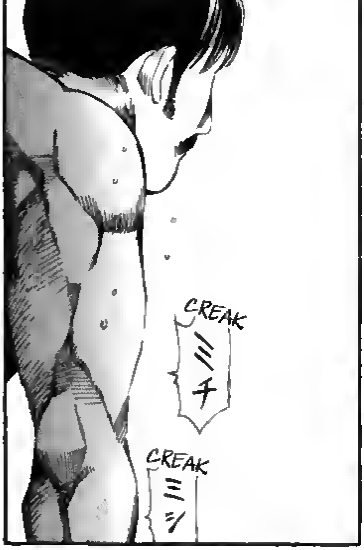
CRASH
URK!
WHAT JUST HAPPENED?
URRRGH... OWWWW...
HERE, CAN YOU STAND ALL RIGHT?
HUH?
THANKS TO YOU, WE CAUGHT THOSE PURSE-SNATCHERS RED-HANDED.
THAT WAS A GOOD DEED YOU JUST DID, SIR!


I HAVE TO SAY, LASSOING A PURSE-SNATCHER OFF A SPEEDING MOTORCYCLE TAKES AN IMPRESSIVE AMOUNT OF SKILL.
IT WAS JUST LIKE A WEST-ERN!
EXCUSE ME, BUT I SIMPLY MUST TELL YOU HOW GRATEFUL I AM FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE.
AH...
HUH?


YOU RULE, LASSO MAN!
THAT WAS WONDER-FUL!
THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.
CLAP
CLAP

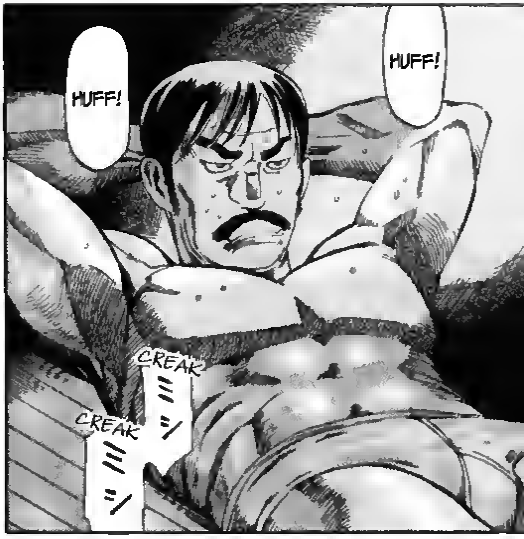
YOU'RE WEL-COME?
THAT IS...
AH... ER...
CLAP

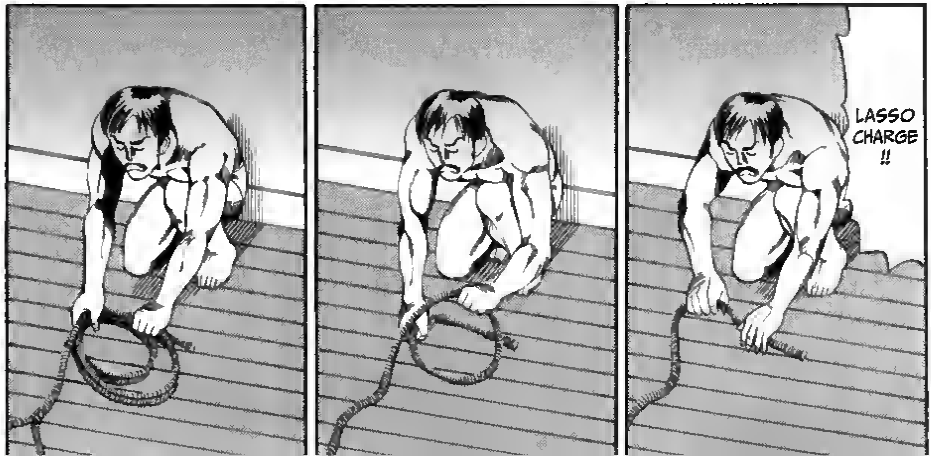
I DON'T UNDERSTAND— I'M A GUY WHO'S LOST HIS JOB, YET PEOPLE ARE PRAISING ME?!
喝
PENANCE
NOW I SEE...
バシャー
SPLASHH
ドドドドオ
SHHHH
...I WAS SO CLOSE TO FALLING INTO EVIL!!


CREAK
CREAK

WHAT A FOOL I'VE BEEN!
HUFF.
HUFF.

LASSO SHOOT!!
BLAM


HUFF!
HUFF!
CREAK
CREAK


LASSO CHARGE !!

OH GREAT SPIRIT OF THE ROPE...
I NOW UNDERSTAND THE REASON WHY I HAVE BEEN GRANTED THE ART OF THE LASSO...
...AND AM READY TO ACCEPT MY TRUE CALLING.

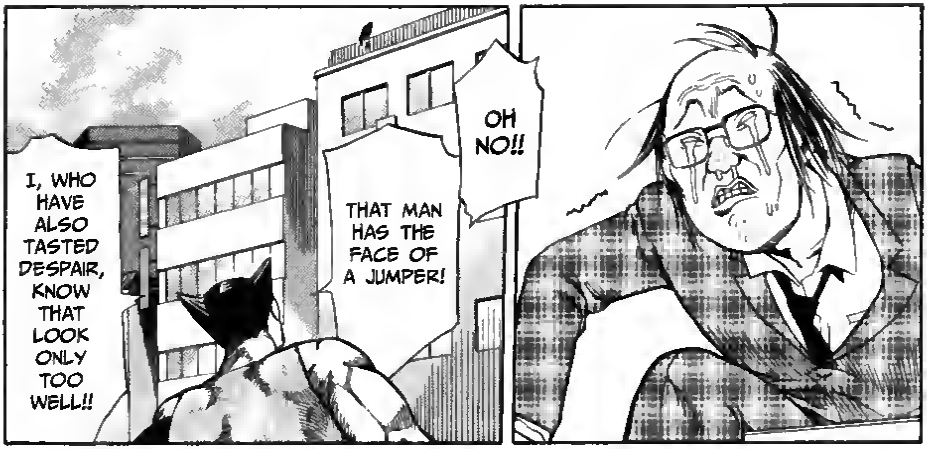
FIGURE: GOD

IN MY SECOND LIFE...
...THOUGH IT BE FROM THE SHADOWS, I SHALL DEDICATE THE ONE ABILITY LEFT TO ME...

NOT AS LASSO FIEND...
...THIS "LASSO"... ENTIRELY TO THE SERVICE OF JUSTICE IN THIS SOCIETY.

...BUT AS LASSO MAN!
TO BE CONTINUED

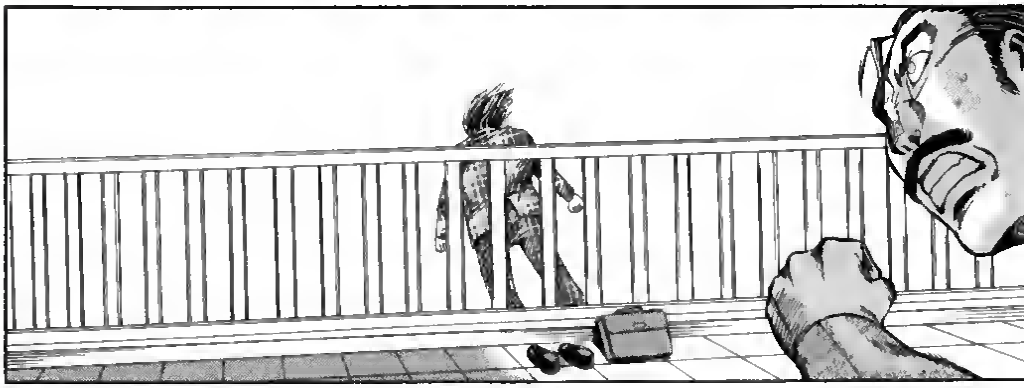
...IT MIGHT'VE BEEN TOO PRESUMPTUOUS OF ME.
...ASSUMING I COULD SOLVE ANY PROBLEM WITH A ROPE...
ALTHOUGH I SAID ALL THAT...
I WILL ONLY USE MY POWERS IN TIMES OF NEED, EVEN IF NOBODY IS THERE TO SEE IT!
THAT SOUNDS SO NOBLE WHEN I SAY IT OUT LOUD.
NO, I MUST NOT STRAY FROM THE PATH!
...COULD HAVE OTHER USES...
A ROPE...
OVER THERE!!
HUH?!



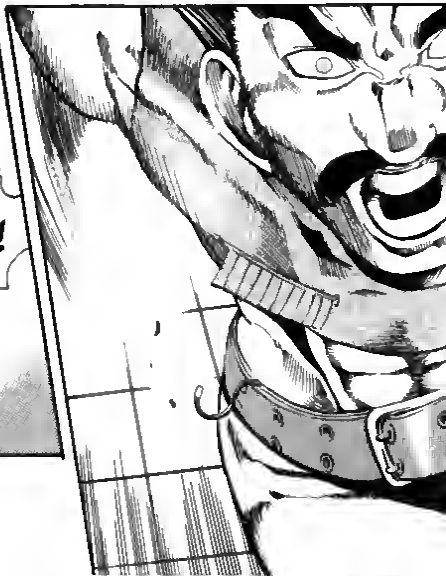
DOOR: EMERGENCY STAIRS

SIGN: OUT OF ORDER. PLEASE USE THE ELEVATOR IN BUILDING #2. WE APOLOGIZE FOR THE INCONVENIENCE

THUD
THUD
THUD
DASH
I HAVE NO CHOICE! I SHALL JUMP OVER FROM THE ADJOINING BUILDING!
THERE!
CLATTER
OKAY, NOW TO FIND SOMETHING I CAN LATCH ONTO...
LASSO SHOOT!!



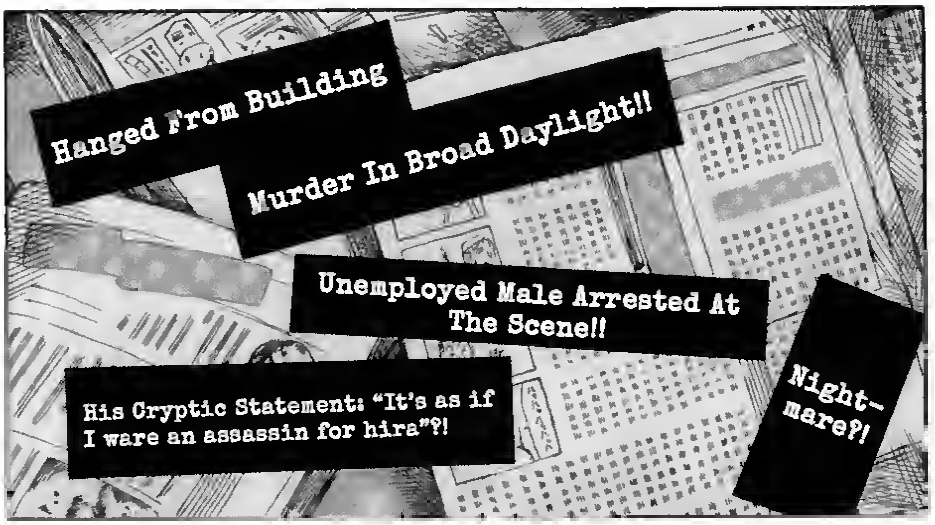
WHIP
ミチ
YA
AAA
AAA!
WHIP
ミシ



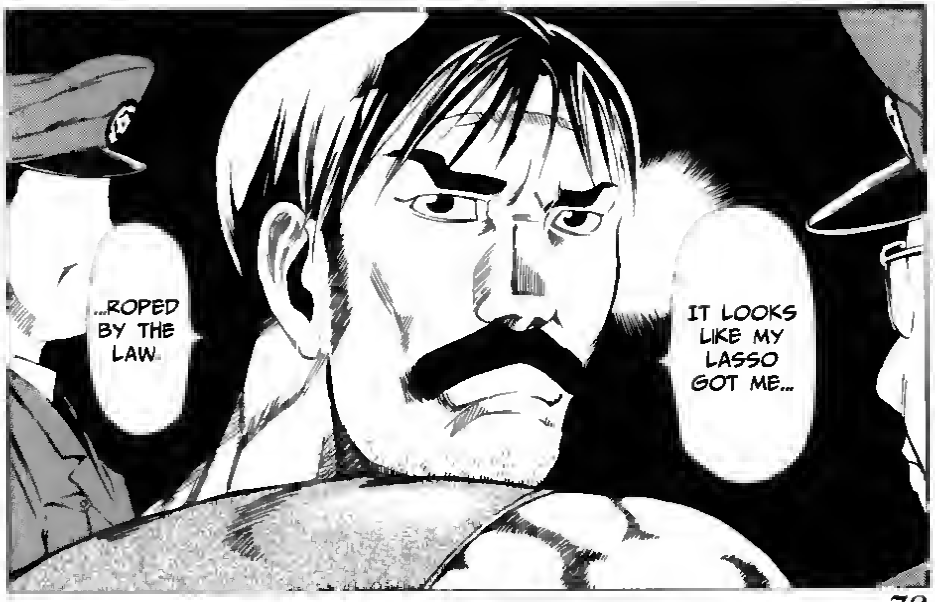
LASSO...
...SHOOT!
MY... NOBLE...
REACH HIM IN TIME!
WHUMP-
ドギャ
SPRANG!
NGGGGGGH

HANG IN THERE! I'M COMING!
YOU CAN HOLD YOUR THANKS UNTIL LA—
TUG
ギュ
YES!
CRACK
ピシ
AUGH!!

I'M SURE MANY OF YOU HAVE REALIZED BY NOW WHAT'S HAPPENED AT THE OTHER END OF THE ROPE.


Hanged From Building
Murder In Broad Daylight!!
Unemployed Male Arrested At The Scene!!
His Cryptic Statement: "It's as if I ware an assassin for hire"?!
Night-mare?!

COME ALONG NOW.


...ROPED BY THE LAW.
IT LOOKS LIKE MY LASSO GOT ME...

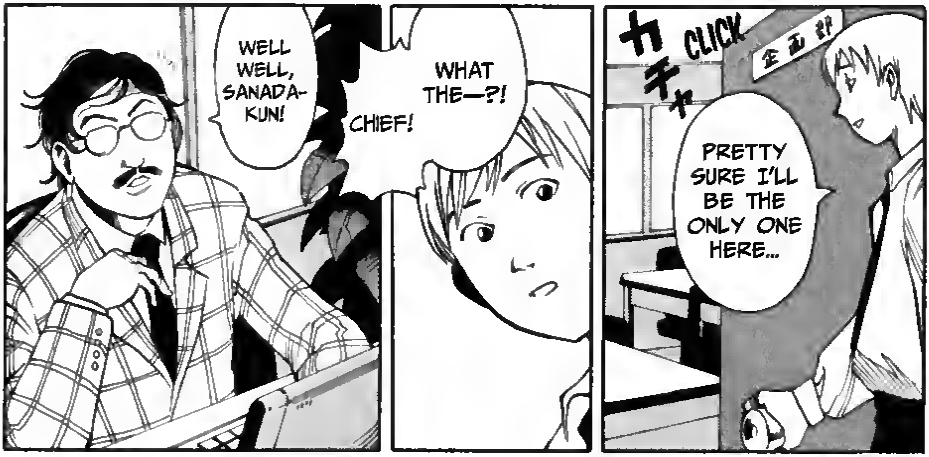
COUNTDOWN

放送部合宿中
A.V. CLUB TRAINING CAMP
JULY [..] - 27TH
THEY'VE ANNOUNCED THE THEME FOR THIS YEAR'S SHORT FILM COMPETITION.
SHORT FILM
THEMATIC CATEGORY
WHOA, THAT THEME'S PRETTY WICKED!
"THE DESTRUCTION OF HUMANITY"!
SO I SAY WE DO THIS, AS OUR LAST OPPORTUNITY TO LEAVE SOMETHING BEHIND.
WE'LL HAVE NOTHING BUT COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS TO LOOK FORWARD TO ONCE SUMMER BREAK IS OVER!
SO'S THE 10 MILLION YEN GRAND PRIZE!

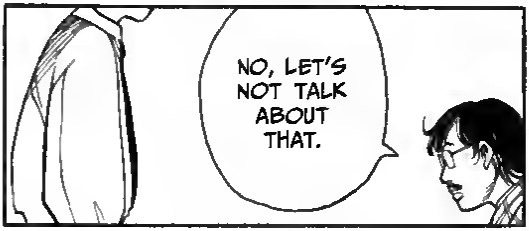
AWE-SOME WHAT THAT'LL BUY.
10 MILLION YEN, HUH? SPLIT FOUR WAYS, THAT'S... UH... 2.5 MILLION YEN APIECE.
WE WERE GOING TO MAKE A FILM FOR THE CULTURAL FESTIVAL ANYWAY.
OKAY, SURE.
¥2.5 MILLION IS ABOUT $25,000
IT'S A PRETTY BROAD THEME. I THINK IT'LL COME DOWN TO HOW CREATIVE A FILM IS.
SO SPEAK UP IF YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS, NO MATTER WHAT THEY ARE.

HUMANITY'S ABOUT TO BE ANNIHILATED BY A HUGE METEOR IMPACT!
KA-
POW!
A METEOR HAS JUST STRUCK THE HEART OF TOKYO.
WE ARE ALL DOOMED.
HOW ABOUT WE FILM SOME FAKE NEWS FOOTAGE?
...AND MAKE IT SO REALISTIC THAT, IF WE BROADCAST IT, PEOPLE WOULD BELIEVE IT WAS REAL...
...AND CAUSE A HUGE PANIC LIKE ORSON WELLES DID WITH HIS RADIO DRAMA!

WE ONLY HAVE 60 THOUSAND YEN LEFT IN CLUB FUNDS, SO WE REALLY CAN'T AFFORD ANYTHING THAT SPECTACULAR.
GEH!
FORGOT TO MENTION THIS, BUT...
1p th
CLICK
ABOUT ¥600
WELL, HOW ABOUT... "HOW WILL WE SPEND OUR FINAL WEEK BEFORE DESTRUC-TION"?!
WE ALL KNOW WE HAVE ONLY ONE WEEK LEFT TO LIVE—
BUT WHAT IF WE JUST ACCEPTED THE FATE OF MANKIND PEACEFULLY...?
THAT'S TOO TRITE.
JUST HEAR ME OUT, ALL RIGHT?

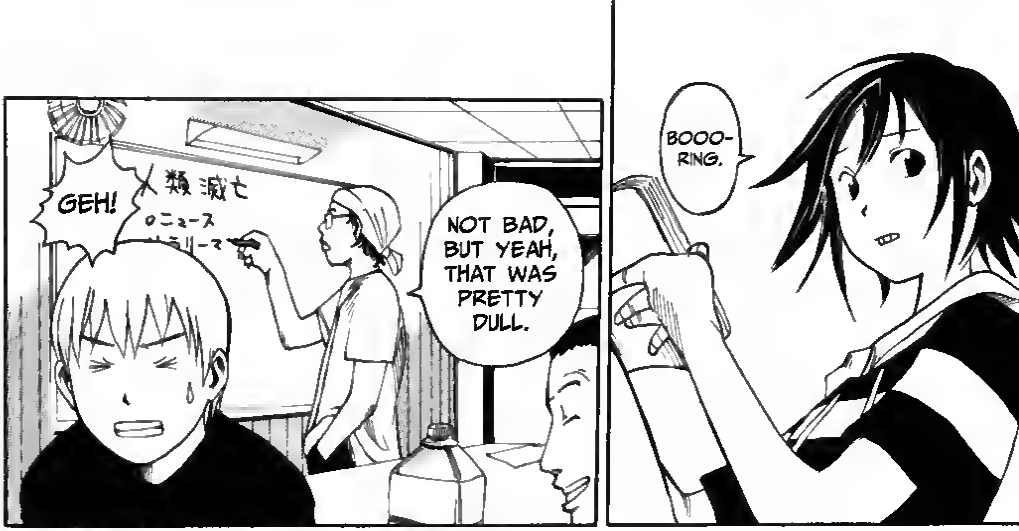


DOOR: PLANNING DEPARTMENT

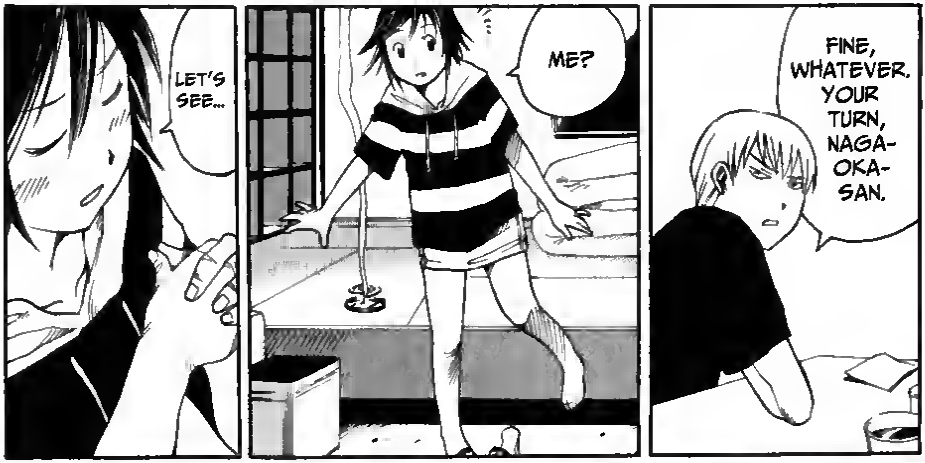


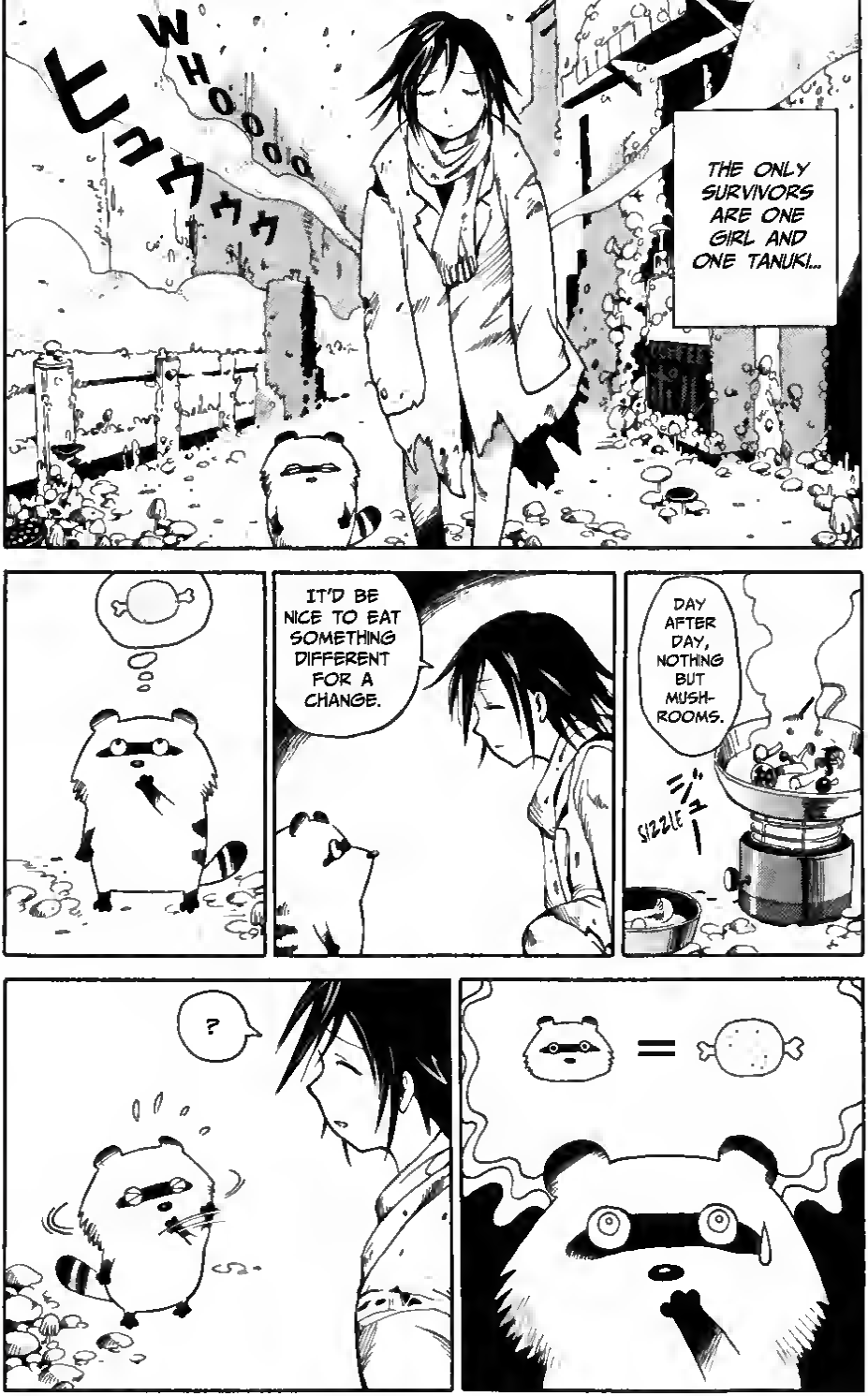
I'M JUST SO USED TO THE WORKAHOLIC LIFESTYLE, I HATE SITTING AROUND THE HOUSE WITH NOTHING TO DO...
CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? JUST ONE WEEK LEFT...

OH!
ガチャ
CLATTER
HA HA HA, JUST LOOK AT US! WE ALL ENDED UP COMING IN TO WORK.
...AND NAGA-OKA-SAN!
IF IT ISN'T ASAI-KUN...
ONCE THE JOB IS DONE, LET'S ALL GO OUT FOR A DRINK!
.....



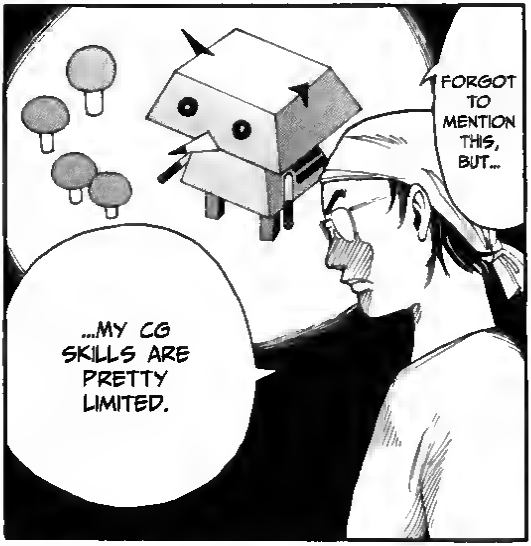
WHITEBOARD: THE DESTRUCTION OF HUMANITY: NEWS, OFFICE WORKERS




WHOOOO
THE ONLY SURVIVORS ARE ONE GIRL AND ONE TANUKI...
IT'D BE NICE TO EAT SOMETHING DIFFERENT FOR A CHANGE.
DAY AFTER DAY, NOTHING BUT MUSH-ROOMS.
SIZZLE
?

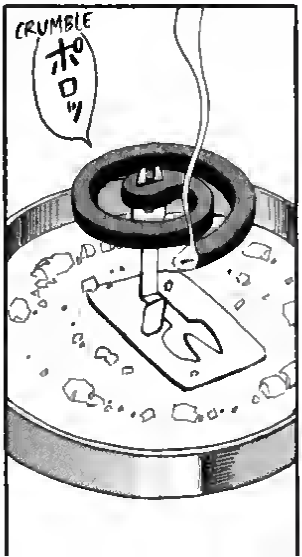
ヒュウウウウウ
WHOOOOOO
!
?
ZIP
!!
?
DASH
CLANG
AND SO THE TANUKI HIDES EVERY POT THEY RUN INTO, TO KEEP HER FROM THINKING ABOUT "TANUKI STEW."
ISN'T THAT CUTE?

HOW'RE WE GONNA FILM THAT ALL-IMPORTANT TANUKI?
OR THE MUSHROOMS.

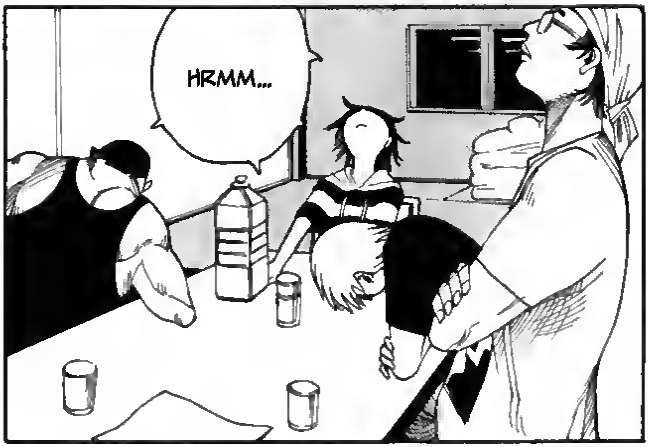

FORGOT TO MENTION THIS, BUT...
...MY CG SKILLS ARE PRETTY LIMITED.

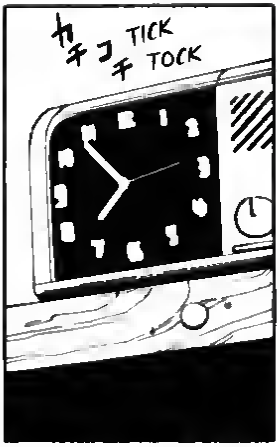
DIDN'T YOU LEARN HOW TO DO IT, CHIEF?
I GUESS WE COULD DO IT IN CG.
CREAK
キ"ッ

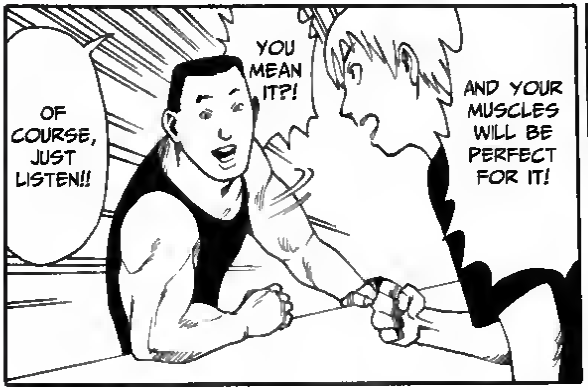
I'LL PLAY THE TANUKI!!
DON'T WORRY, NAGA-OKA!
カ" CLANG ラ


CRUMBLE
ボロ"

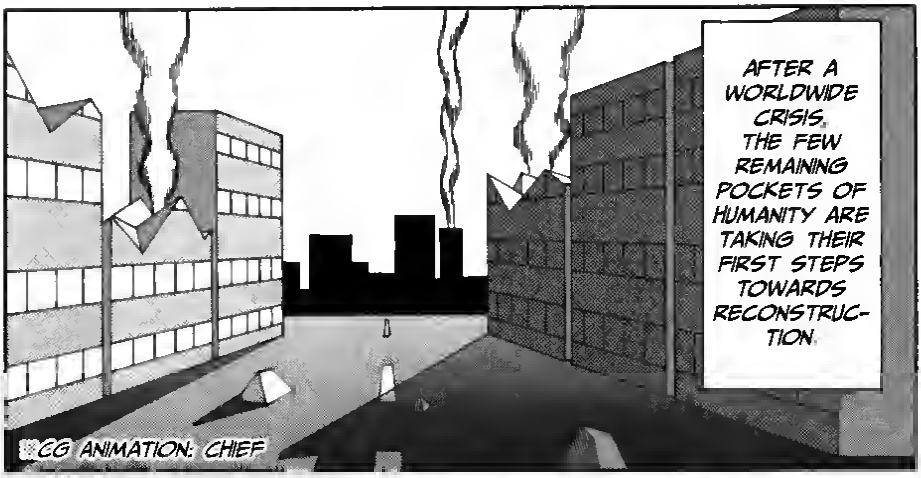
GEH!
ヒュウウウウ
WHOOO


HRMM...

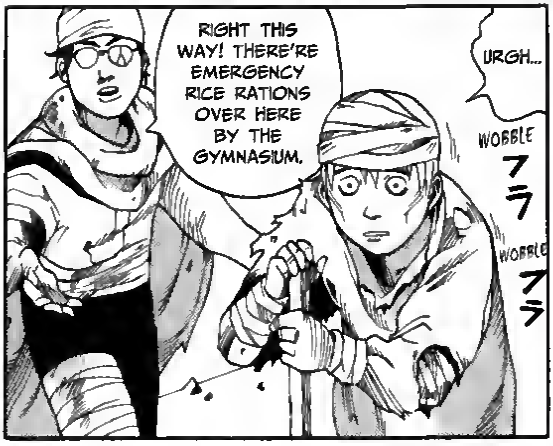

カチコチ TICK TOCK

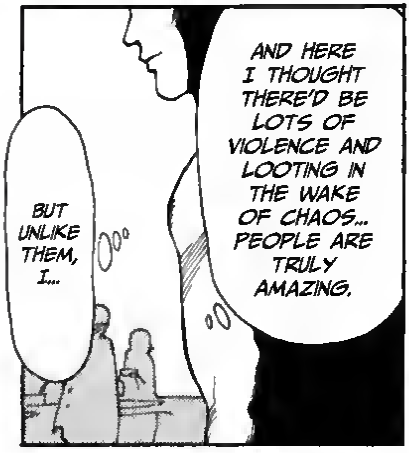

OF COURSE, JUST LISTEN!!
YOU MEAN IT?!
AND YOUR MUSCLES WILL BE PERFECT FOR IT!

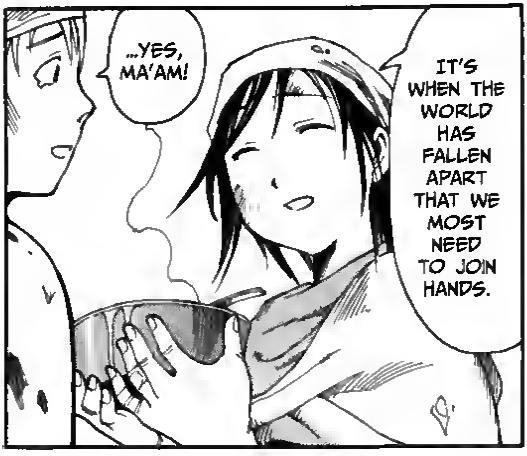
OKAY! I'VE GOT THE BEST IDEA EVER!


AFTER A WORLDWIDE CRISIS, THE FEW REMAINING POCKETS OF HUMANITY ARE TAKING THEIR FIRST STEPS TOWARDS RECONSTRUCTION.
CG ANIMATION: CHIEF

WE'VE MADE PLENTY, SO HELP YOURSELF.


RIGHT THIS WAY! THERE'RE EMERGENCY RICE RATIONS OVER HERE BY THE GYMNASIUM.
URGH...
WOBBLE フラ
WOBBLE フラ

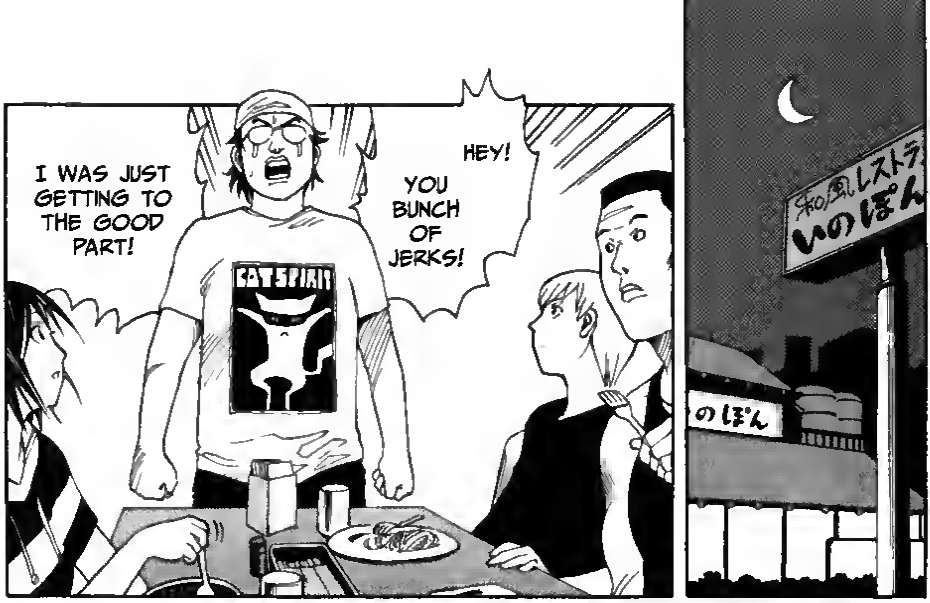

AND HERE I THOUGHT THERE'D BE LOTS OF VIOLENCE AND LOOTING IN THE WAKE OF CHAOS... PEOPLE ARE TRULY AMAZING.
BUT UNLIKE THEM, I...


...YES, MA'AM!
IT'S WHEN THE WORLD HAS FALLEN APART THAT WE MOST NEED TO JOIN HANDS.

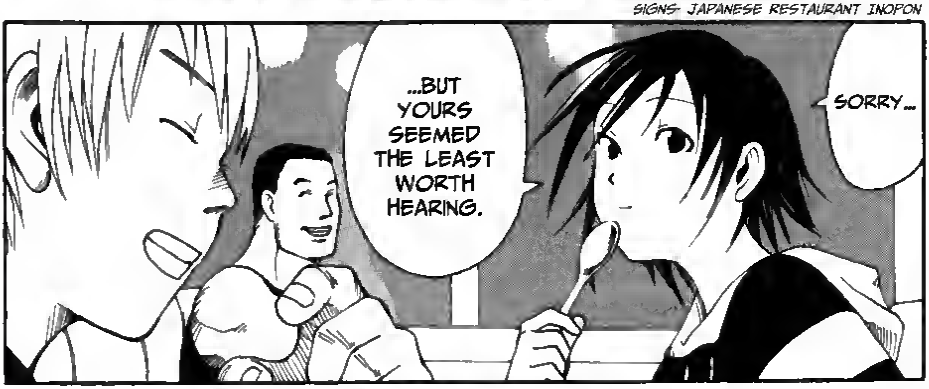
—THROUGH LOVE AND TRUST COMES AN END TO VIOLENCE—

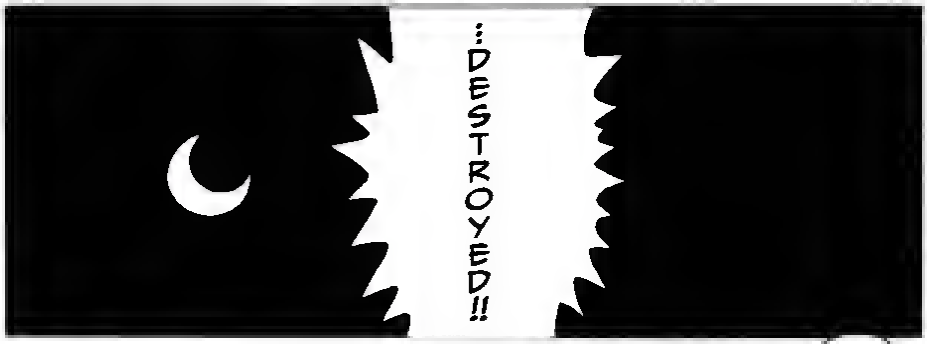
END

GEH!
MOHAWK AND ALL...
LET'S JUST HOPE YOUR HAIR WILL GET BACK TO NORMAL BEFORE THE END OF BREAK.
THAT WAS AWE-SOME, SANA-DA!
SMACK
YEAH!
YOU NEED TO CONTRIBUTE SOMETHING TOO, CHIEF!
WHAT'S WITH YOU, MAN?! YOU JUST KEEP SHOOTING DOWN EVERYONE ELSE'S IDEAS! WE'LL NEVER GET ANY-WHERE AT THIS RATE!
...I'VE HAD THIS GREAT IDEA FOR A STORY WHERE A HERO OF JUSTICE BATTLES VALIANTLY TO DEFEND HUMANITY FROM THE DESTRUCTION BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE EVIL FORCES OF...
CAT SPIRIT
ACTUALLY, FOR SOME TIME NOW...
VERY WELL.

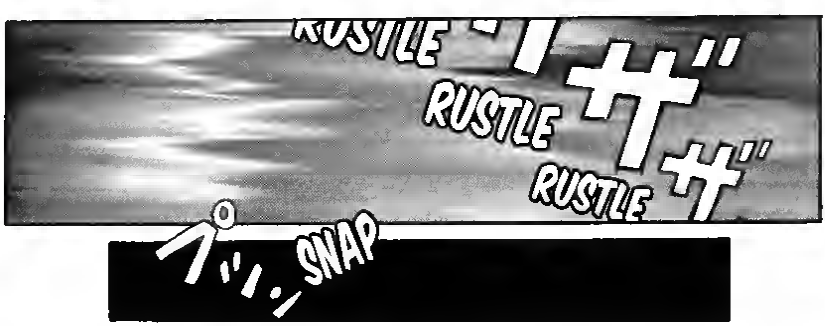


SIGNS: JAPANESE RESTAURANT INOPON





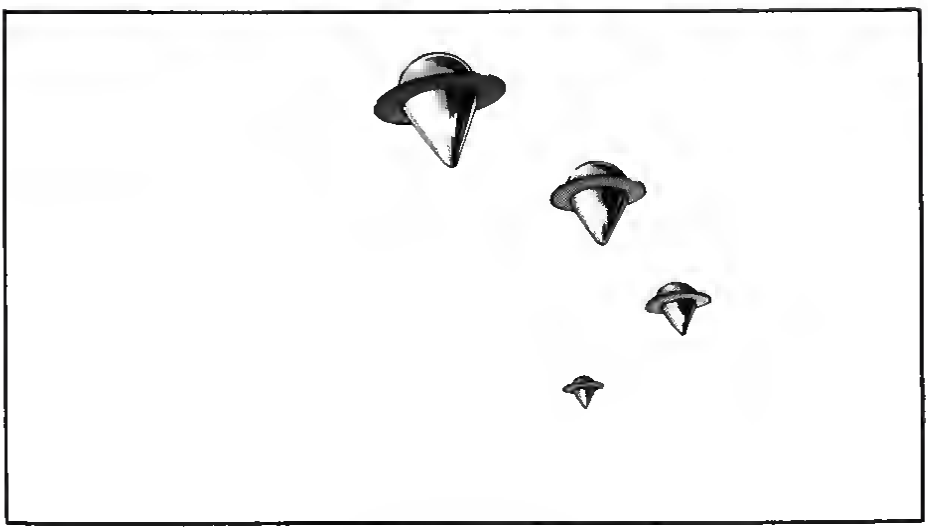
SCRIPT & CAST
CHIEF
ASAI
SANADA
NAGAOKA
(XX HIGH SCHOOL A.V. CLUB)



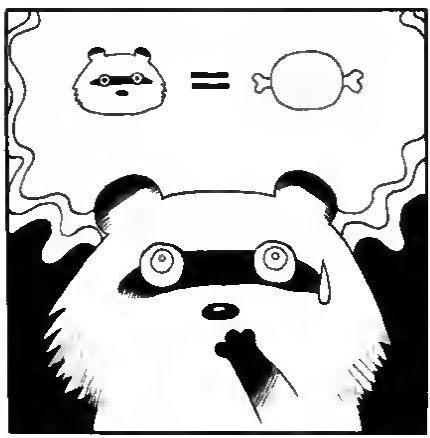
FLAP
2.5 MILLION YEN EACH!
WE GOT THE GRAND PRIZE! 10 MILLION YEN!
RUSTLE
LET'S PUT IT TO GOOD USE!
FWOOSH
HEHEH... AFTER ALL THAT EFFORT TO MAKE BIG BUCKS... AT LEAST NOW WE'VE GOT MONEY TO BURN...
WE REALLY ARE A BUNCH OF IDIOTS, AREN'T WE?
GREAT BIG STUPID IDIOTS...

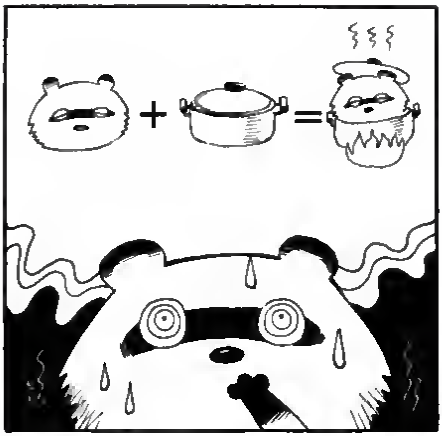
GET AHOLD OF YOUR-SELF!
NAGA-OKA? NAGA-OKA!
AH-HA-HAHAHAH, HEE HEE HEE HEE...
YOU JUST... GOTTA LAUGH.
WHIZZ
ヒュー
ヒュー
WHIZZ
AH, CRAP, THEY'RE HERE! WE'D BETTER WITHDRAW!
IF YOU SAY SO!

SIGN: TEXTILES
THIS KIND OF LAME-ASS ALIEN INVASION PLOT...
...WOULDN'T EVEN GET US AN HONORABLE MENTION, YOU BASTARDS!!



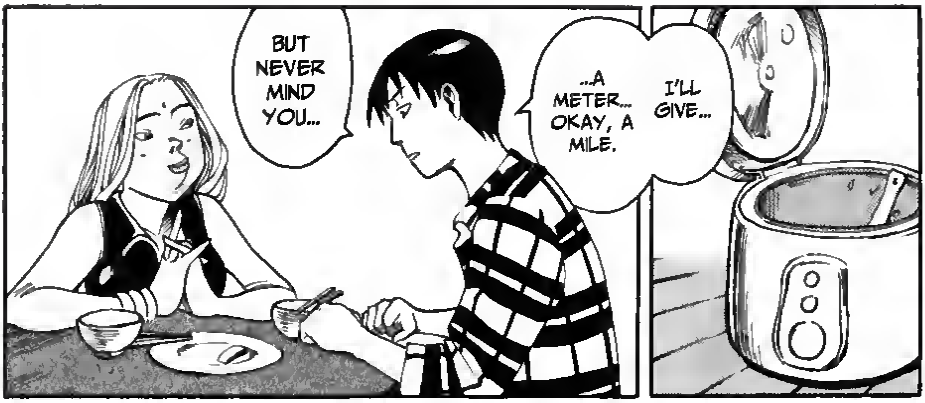
Present for me

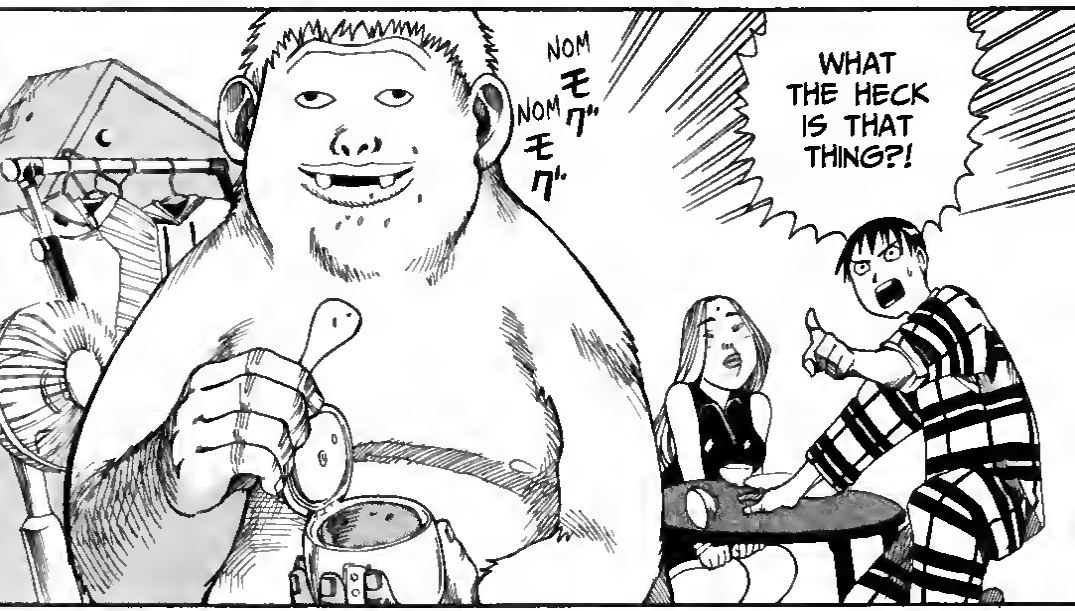


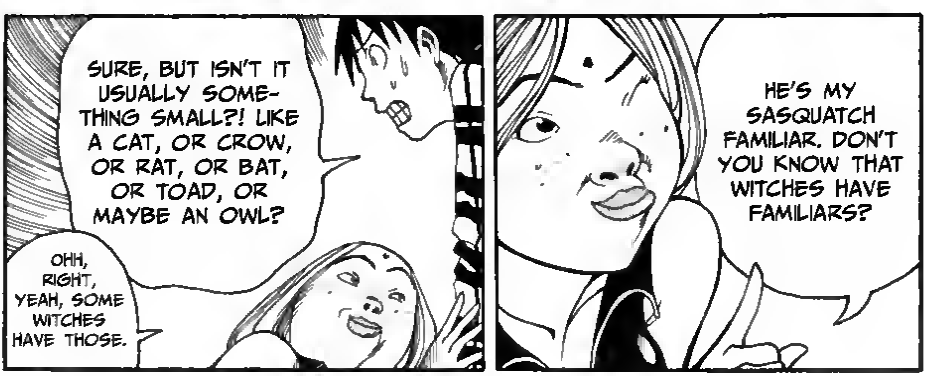


BARBARA
CHIRP チュン
CHIRP チュン
CHIRP チュン
MMRMM...
IT'S THE SECOND MORNING AFTER SHE CAME INTO MY LIFE...
M...
MORNING, YOSHIO.
SHE REALLY DOES EXIST.
SO IT WASN'T A DREAM.
YAWWN.

MOVE OUT OF HERE, I'M BEGGING YOU!
NO CAN DO.
PLEASE?
BUT COULD YOU DO IT SOME-WHERE ELSE?
WELL, YEAH, I KNOW THAT ALREADY.
I'LL GET DISQUALIFIED IF I CHANGE MY HOME-STAY RESIDENCE AFTER IT'S ALREADY BEEN ARRANGED.
TRAINEE WITCHES LIKE ME HAVE TO STAY IN THE HUMAN WORLD FOR A WHOLE YEAR IN ORDER TO BECOME FULLY-FLEDGED WITCHES, REMEMBER?
I'M THE ONE WHO HAS TO PUT UP WITH IT! ME!!
WE'LL JUST HAVE TO PUT UP WITH IT.


BUT NEVER MIND YOU...
I'LL GIVE... ...A METER... OKAY, A MILE.

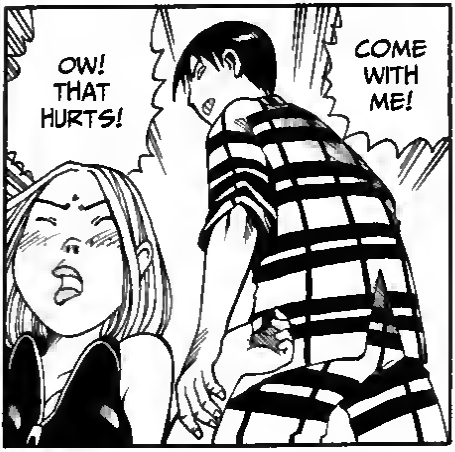

NOM モグ
NOM モグ
WHAT THE HECK IS THAT THING?!

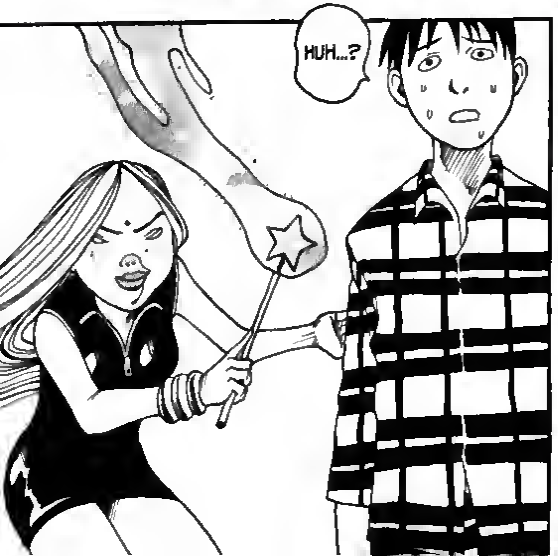

SURE, BUT ISN'T IT USUALLY SOMETHING SMALL?! LIKE A CAT, OR CROW, OR RAT, OR BAT, OR TOAD, OR MAYBE AN OWL?
OHH, RIGHT, YEAH, SOME WITCHES HAVE THOSE.
HE'S MY SASQUATCH FAMILIAR. DON'T YOU KNOW THAT WITCHES HAVE FAMILIARS?

DON'T CRY, YOSHIO. WE'LL BRING HIM UP TOGETHER.
THIS GUY'S EATING ME OUT OF HOUSE AND HOME! I HAD A WHOLE FIVE KILOS OF RICE IN THIS BAG YESTERDAY, AND NOW LOOK!!
DEFINITELY DO NOT EAT THE HUMAN!!
YES, BAD! VERY VERY BAD!!
EAT HUMAN BAD?
RUMBLE
I HAVE NO MORE RICE!!
I BEG YOU, SPARE ME!
ME YOU FRIEND.
RUMBLE

OH!
I KNOW!

WHAM
OH...
WHY, OF COURSE I DON'T MIND... YOU TWO HAVE FUN, NOW!
HEE HEE HEE...

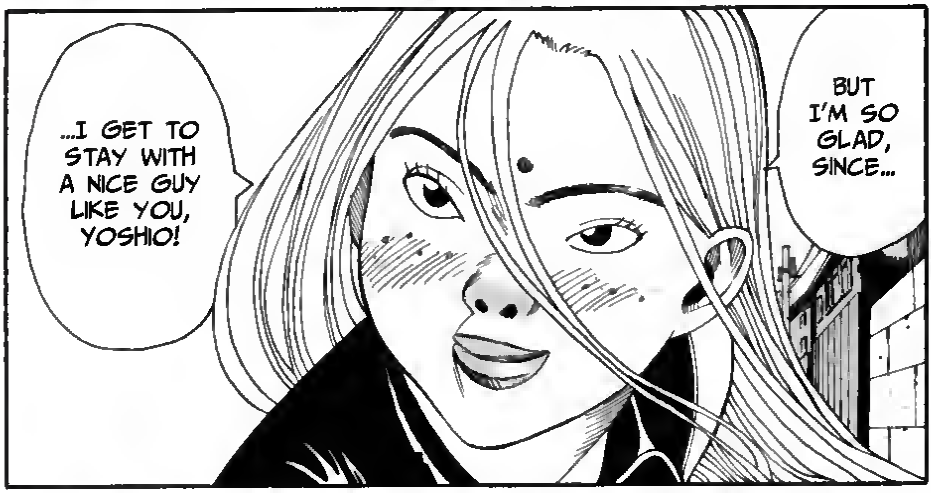

OW! THAT HURTS!
COME WITH ME!


HUH...?

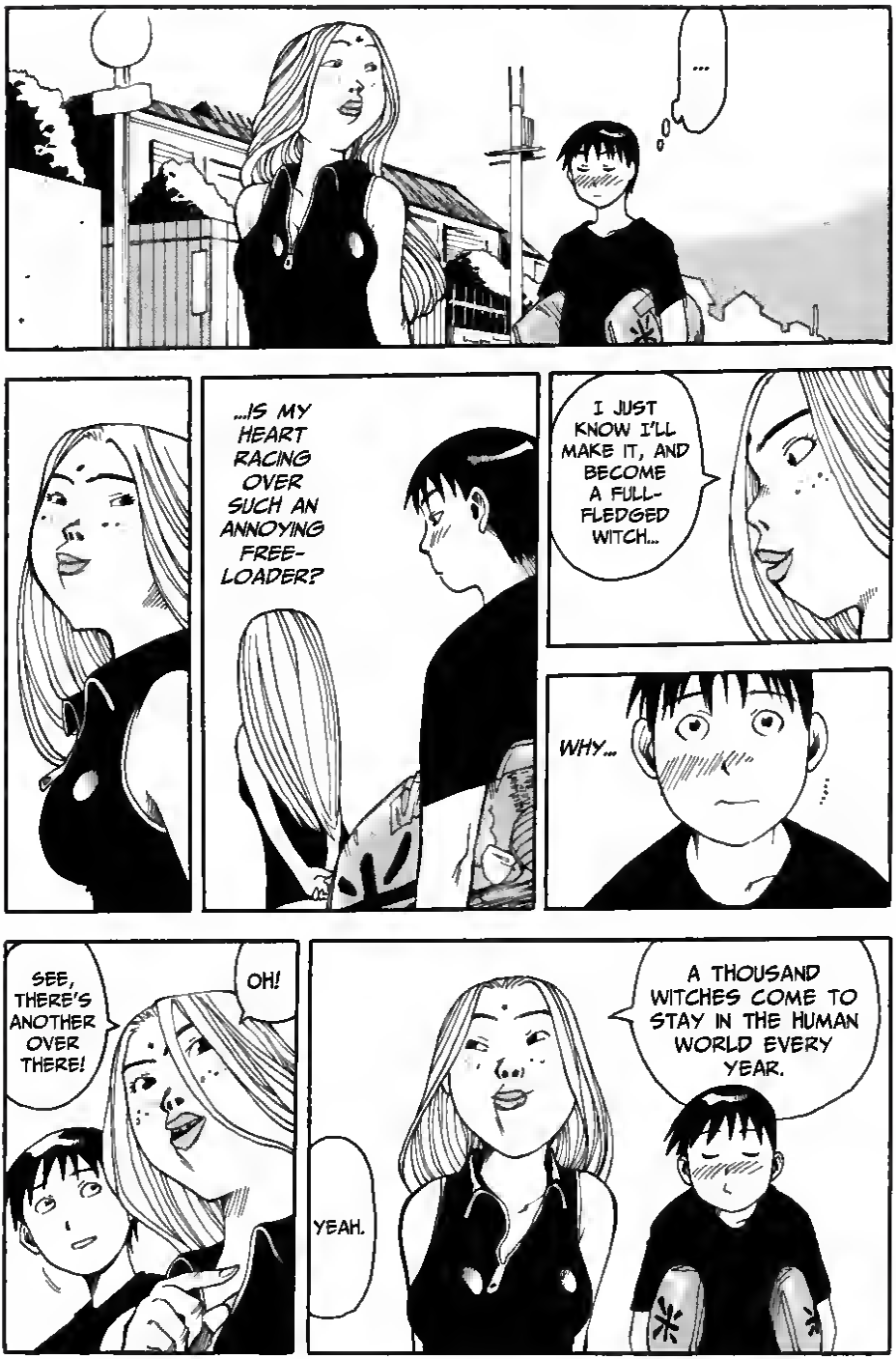
HEY, LANDLADY, YOU DON'T ALLOW COHABITATING IN THIS APARTMENT, RIGHT?
DASH
DASH
DASH
AAA

IT WAS BY LOTTERY.
LOT-TERY, HUH?
WHY'D YOU DECIDE ON MY PLACE?
HM?
SAY...
TRUDGE TRUDGE
トボ" トボ"

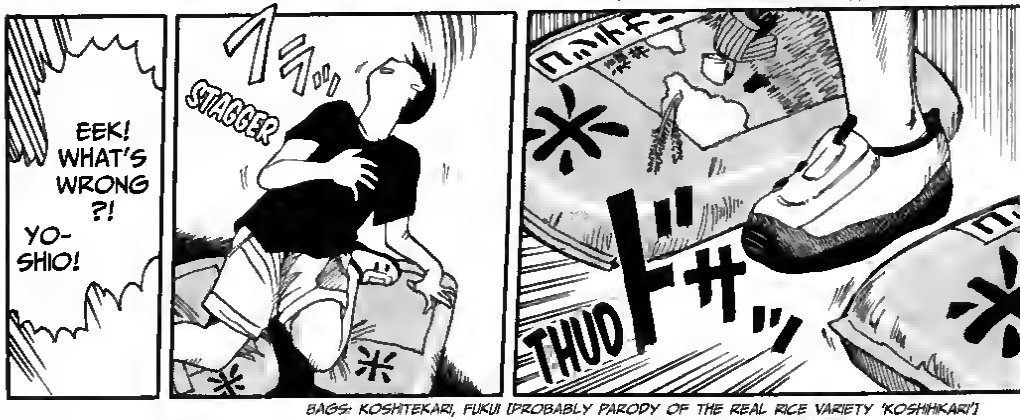
BAGS: RICE


...I GET TO STAY WITH A NICE GUY LIKE YOU, YOSHIO!
BUT I'M SO GLAD, SINCE...

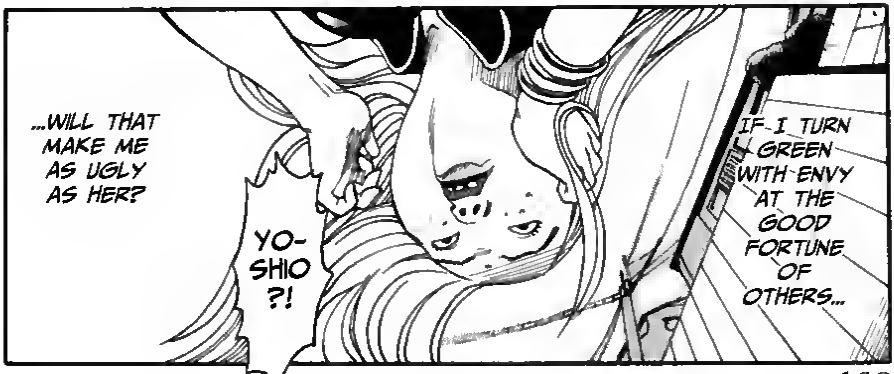
HUH...?


...
...IS MY HEART RACING OVER SUCH AN ANNOYING FREE-LOADER?
I JUST KNOW I'LL MAKE IT, AND BECOME A FULL-FLEDGED WITCH...
WHY...
SEE, THERE'S ANOTHER OVER THERE!
OH!
A THOUSAND WITCHES COME TO STAY IN THE HUMAN WORLD EVERY YEAR.
YEAH.

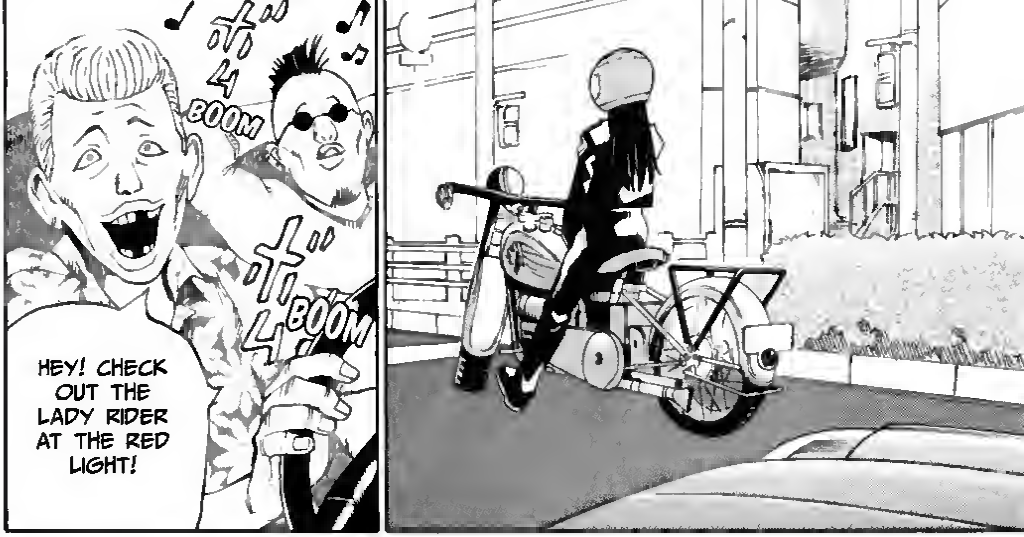
BAG: QUALITY FRESH INGREDIENTS / PAL-MART

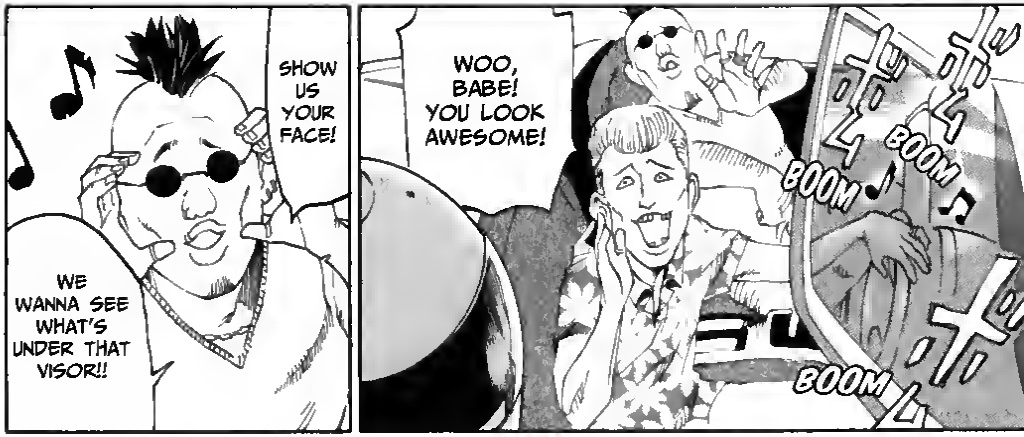


BAGS: KOSHITEKARI, FUKUI [PROBABLY PARODY OF THE REAL RICE VARIETY 'KOSHIHIKARI']

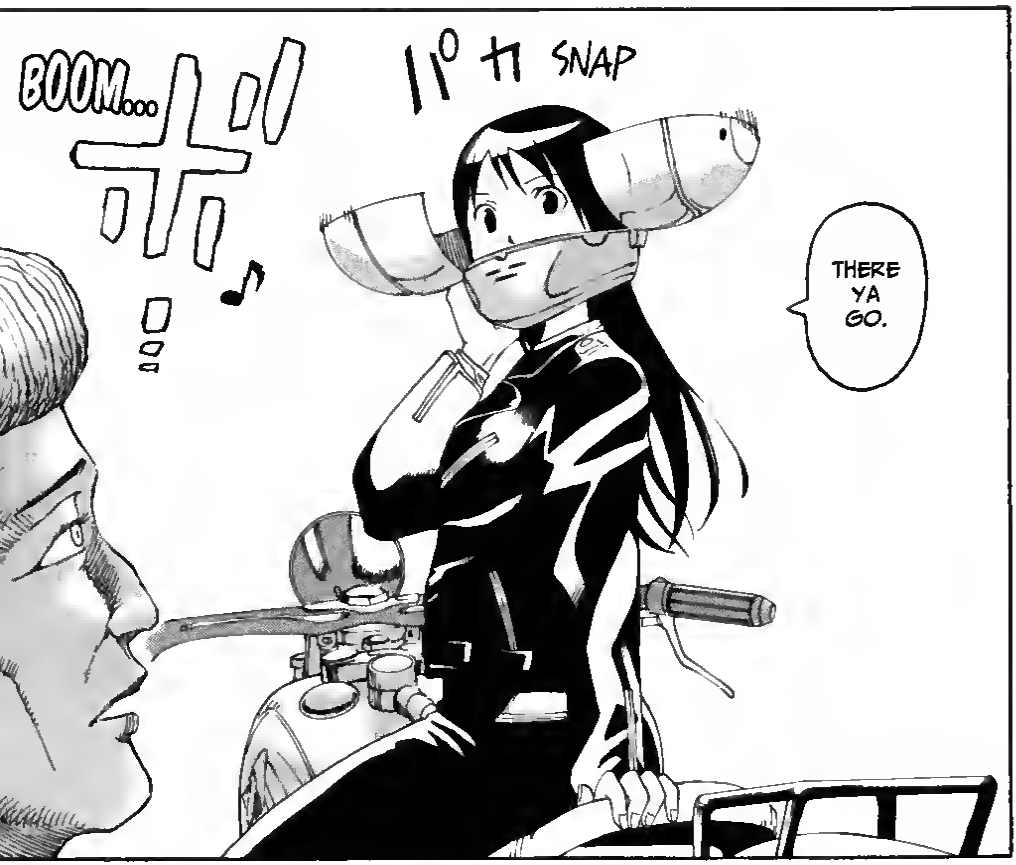


TAIZOU'S HELMET

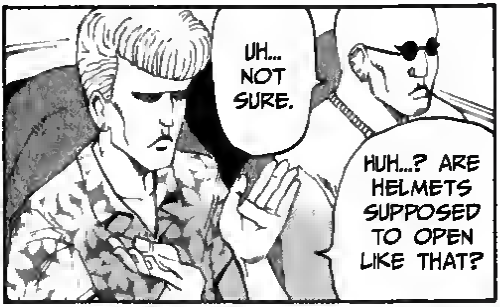

BOOM
BOOM
HEY! CHECK OUT THE LADY RIDER AT THE RED LIGHT!


SHOW US YOUR FACE!
WE WANNA SEE WHAT'S UNDER THAT VISOR!!
WOO, BABE! YOU LOOK AWESOME!
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM

BOOM
BOOM
SHOULD I GIVE THEM A FREE SHOW...?
SHEESH, I'M ALWAYS GETTING ANNOYING GUYS WHISTLING AT ME.
BOOM
BOOM
SHOW US! SHOW US!!

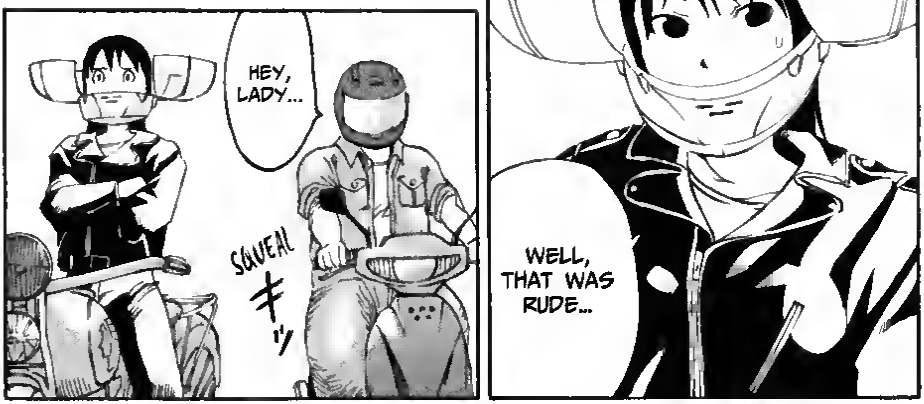

BOOM...
SNAP
THERE YA GO.

L-LET'S JUST GO.

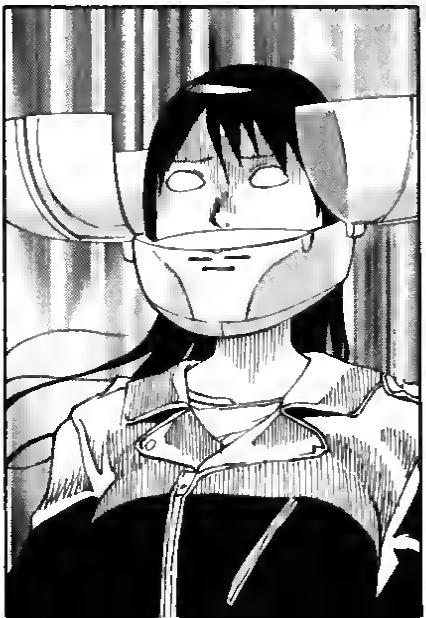

UH... NOT SURE.
HUH...? ARE HELMETS SUPPOSED TO OPEN LIKE THAT?

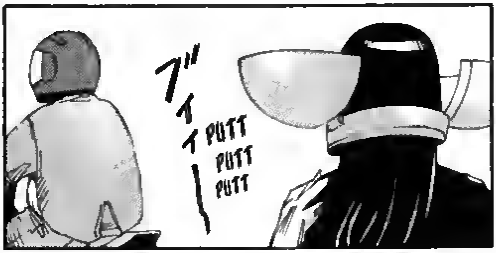
...WHAT THE?

GOT ME. DON'T MAKE EYE CONTACT.
A GAG, MAY-BE?


HEY, LADY...
SQUEAL
キッ
WELL, THAT WAS RUDE...

ヒッ
THUMBS UP
NICE GAG! I LOVE YOUR STYLE!!

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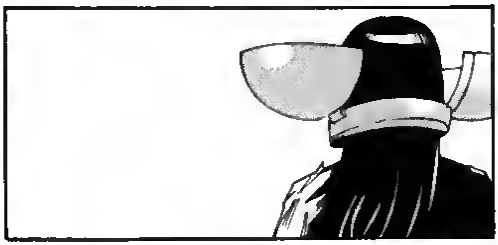
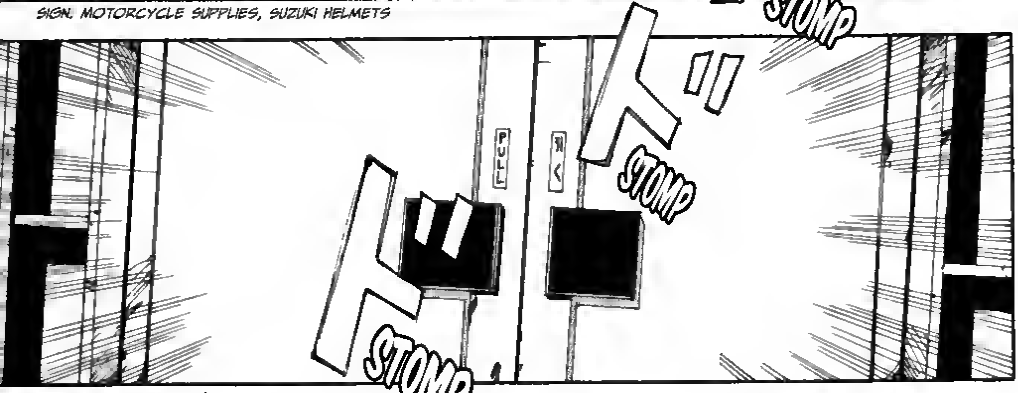
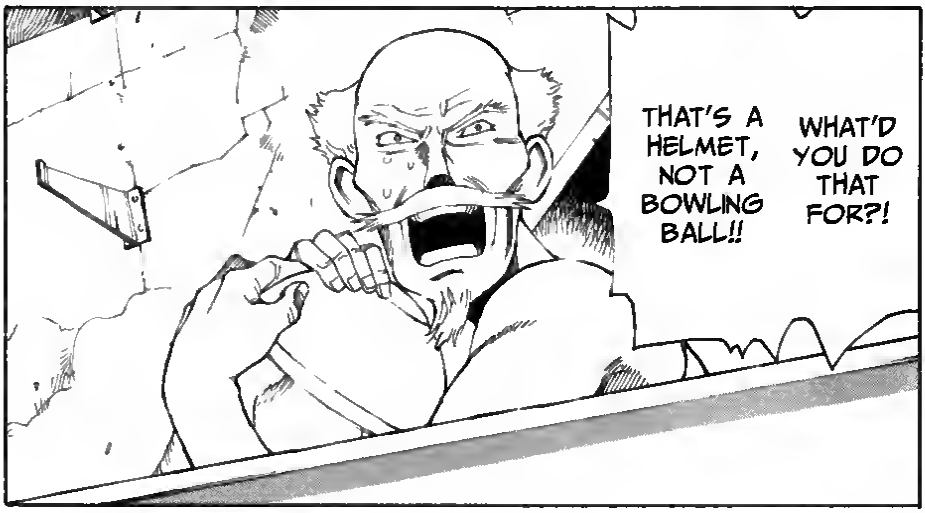
PUTT
PUTT
PUTT



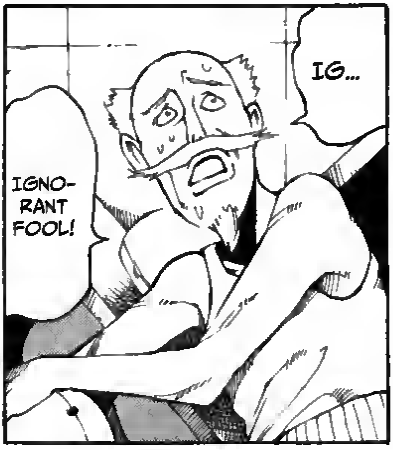
SIGN: MOTORCYCLE SUPPLIES, SUZUKI HELMETS

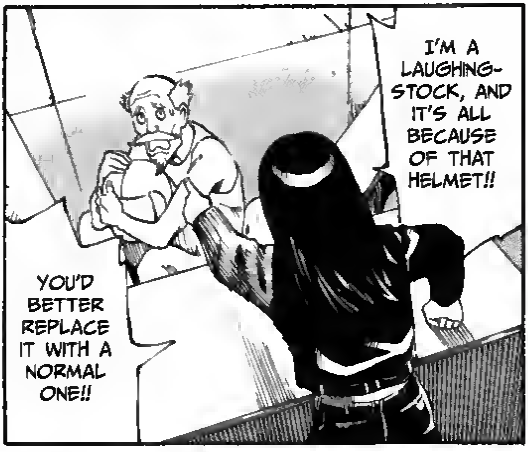


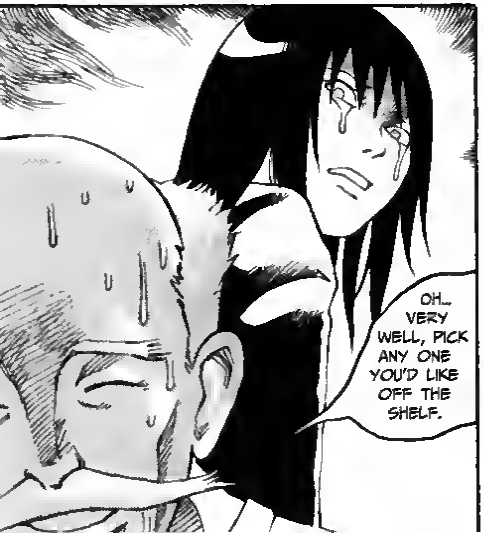
WHAM
HEY!
WHAAAAAAAA?!

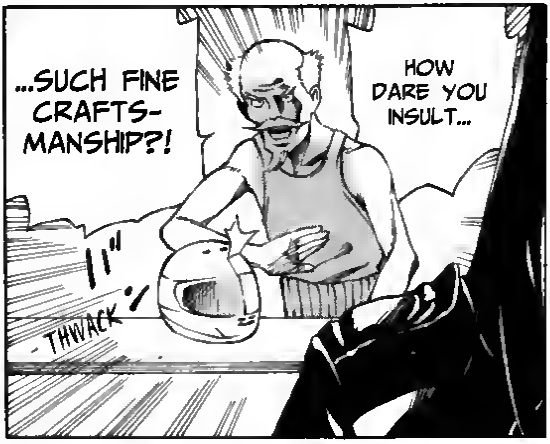

THAT'S A HELMET, NOT A BOWLING BALL!!
WHAT'D YOU DO THAT FOR?!

OH... RIGHT, YOU PURCHASED THIS YESTERDAY, THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATRONAGE...
THEN WHY DOES IT HAVE THESE HOLES?!


IG...
IGNO-RANT FOOL!

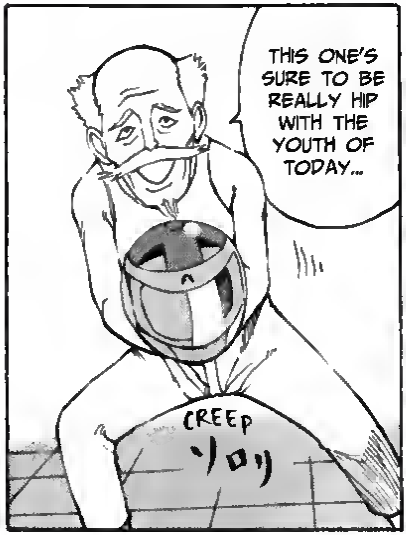

I'M A LAUGHING-STOCK, AND IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF THAT HELMET!!
YOU'D BETTER REPLACE IT WITH A NORMAL ONE!!


OH... VERY WELL, PICK ANY ONE YOU'D LIKE OFF THE SHELF.

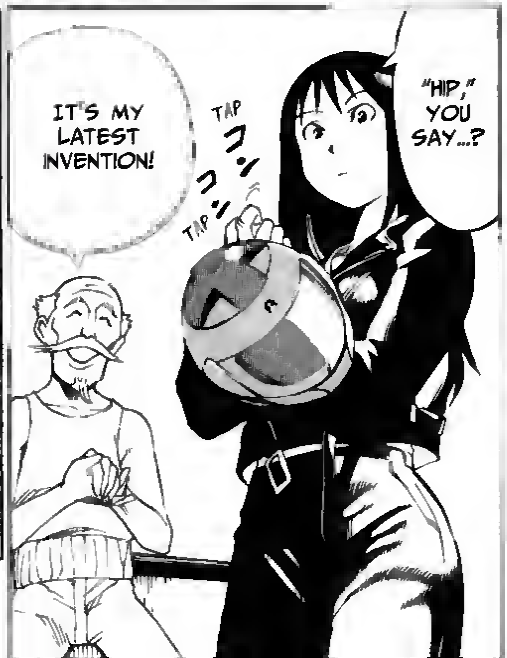

...SUCH FINE CRAFTS-MANSHIP?!
HOW DARE YOU INSULT...
THWACK

IF YOU LIKE...

IF I CAN'T FIND A GOOD ONE, YOU'LL HAVE TO REFUND WHAT I PAID YESTERDAY.

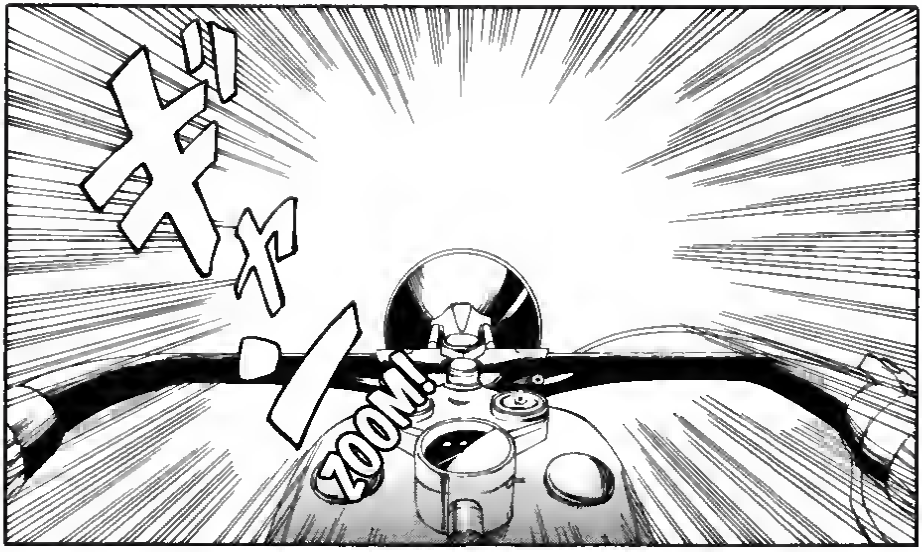

THIS ONE'S SURE TO BE REALLY HIP WITH THE YOUTH OF TODAY...
CREEP
ソロリ

THIS HELMET HAS THE ABILITY...
...TO READ THE WEARER'S MIND!!

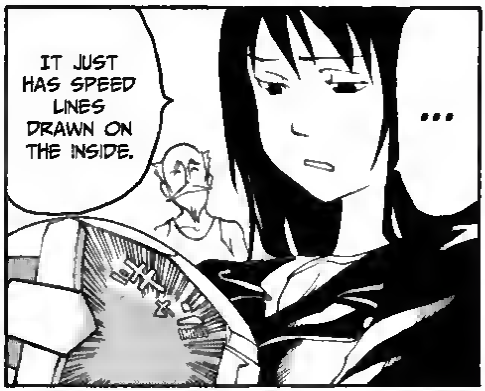

IT'S MY LATEST INVENTION!
TAP
TAP
"HIP," YOU SAY...?

WHIRRR
PLOP
ブーン
BZZZZ
THAT HELMET'S ONBOARD COMPUTER DETECTS THE WEARER'S CURRENT EMOTIONAL STATE, AND THEN PROJECTS A MATCHING EXPRESSION ONTO THE VISOR.
?
ズボ
TUG
WANT ME TO EXPLAIN IN GREATER DETAIL?
PLEASE DON'T.
I SEE.
ブン
BZZZ
WHA?! IN WHAT WAY?!
IT STINKS.

WEARING THIS HELMET WILL INCREASE YOUR RIDING PERFOR-MANCE BY FIFTY PERCENT!!
I SEEM TO REMEMBER AN OLD GUY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE THAT WHILE STUMBLING DOWNSTAIRS... IN AN OLD ANIME.
ER... THIS ONE MAY BE MORE YOUR STYLE.
DON'T GET THROWN OFF, NOW!!
WELL, THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO LOSE, SO HOP ON YOUR BIKE AND GIVE IT A SPIN.
?
WHOA!
SQUEEZE

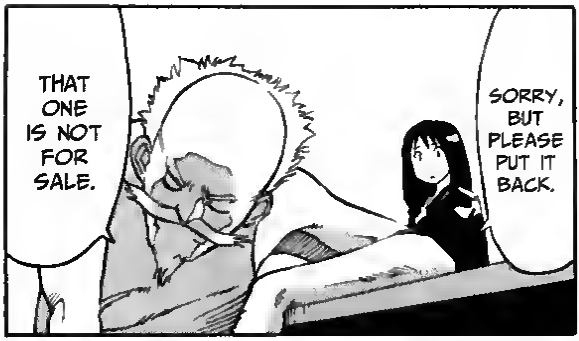

ギャー
ZOOM!

YOU REALLY KNOW YOUR STUFF, MISS!
OH! YOU CALLED THEM "SPEED LINES"!


IT JUST HAS SPEED LINES DRAWN ON THE INSIDE.
...

HEY, I CANT SEE!
THERE'S NOTHING HERE WORTH BOTHERING WITH.

HM?
THAT ONE LOOKS LIKE IT MIGHT BE DECENT.
I'LL TAKE IT!
BUT WOULD YOU MIND REMOVING THIS PIECE FIRST?
.....
YOU CAN'T HAVE IT.


THAT ONE IS NOT FOR SALE.
SORRY, BUT PLEASE PUT IT BACK.

HUH?

THIS IS THE LAST HELMET WORN BY TAIZOU.
I'VE MADE SOME MODIFICA-TIONS, BUT...

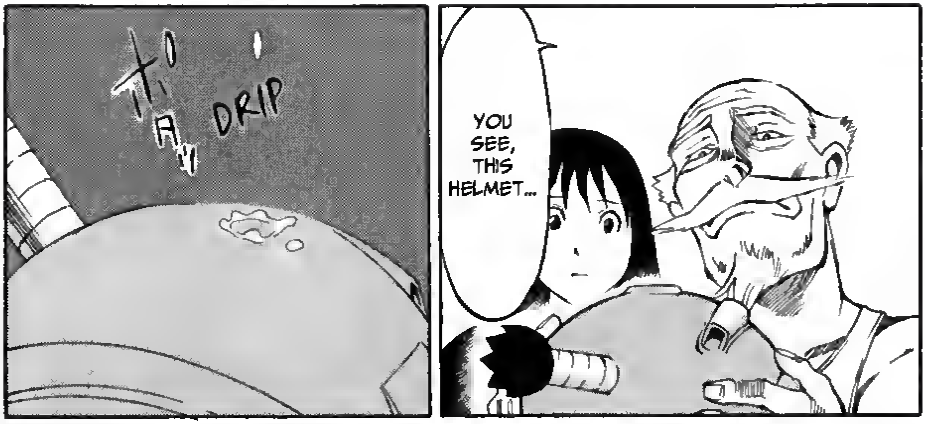
MY DEAR SON...

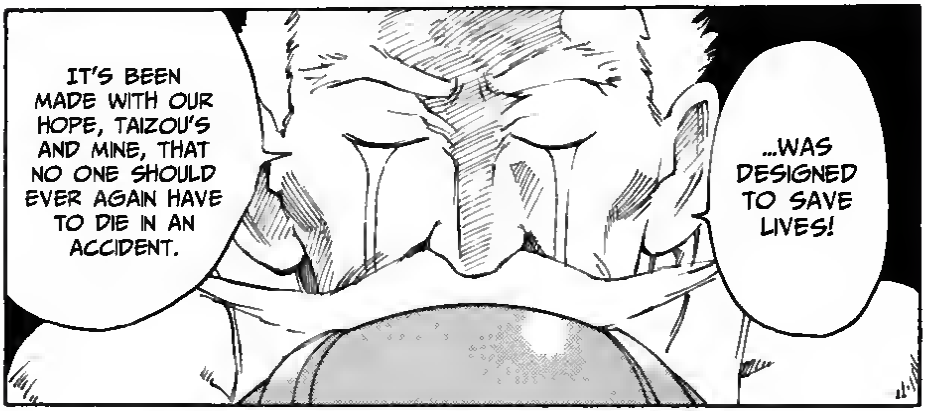
IT'S JUST NOT READY YET!
I WANT YOU FOR U.S. ARMY
NV 1995

...I'LL NEED MY MONEY BACK...
BUT... WELL... IF YOU WON'T LET ME HAVE THE HELMET, THEN...

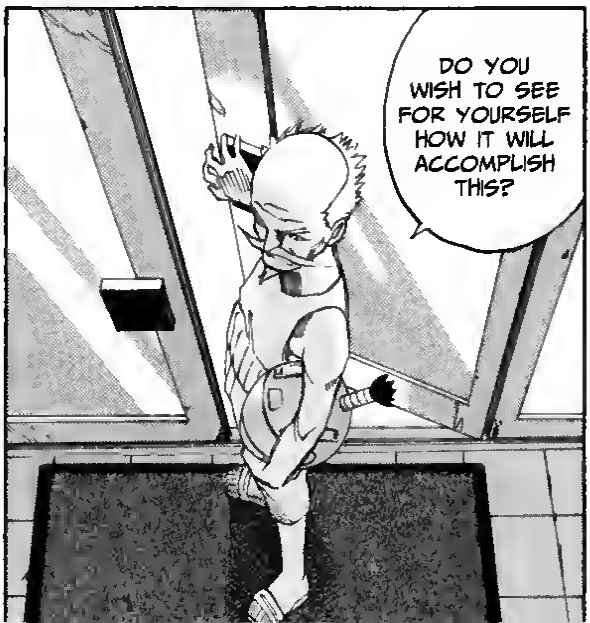
LET ME FINISH IT, AND THEN YOU CAN HAVE IT.
THERE MUST BE SOME SPECIAL REASON WHY YOU CHOSE TAIZOU'S HELMET.
...I'VE GOT IT!

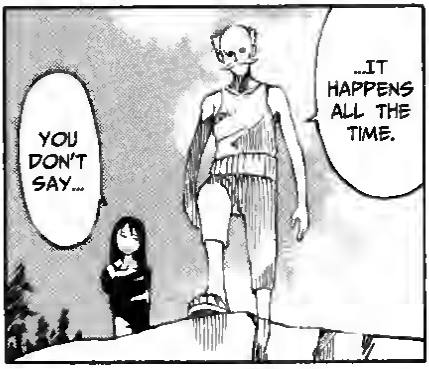
I MUST MAKE SURE THAT IT FUNCTIONS PROPERLY.
NO, JUST SOME FINAL TESTS.
IS THERE MUCH YOU HAVE LEFT TO DO?


DRIP
YOU SEE, THIS HELMET...

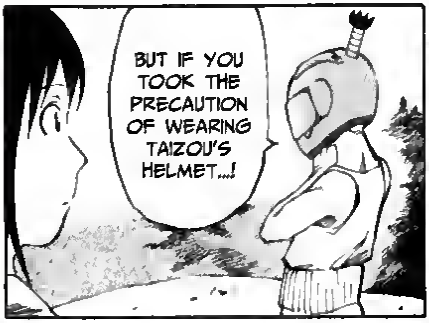

IT'S BEEN MADE WITH OUR HOPE, TAIZOU'S AND MINE, THAT NO ONE SHOULD EVER AGAIN HAVE TO DIE IN AN ACCIDENT.
...WAS DESIGNED TO SAVE LIVES!

YES.


DO YOU WISH TO SEE FOR YOURSELF HOW IT WILL ACCOMPLISH THIS?

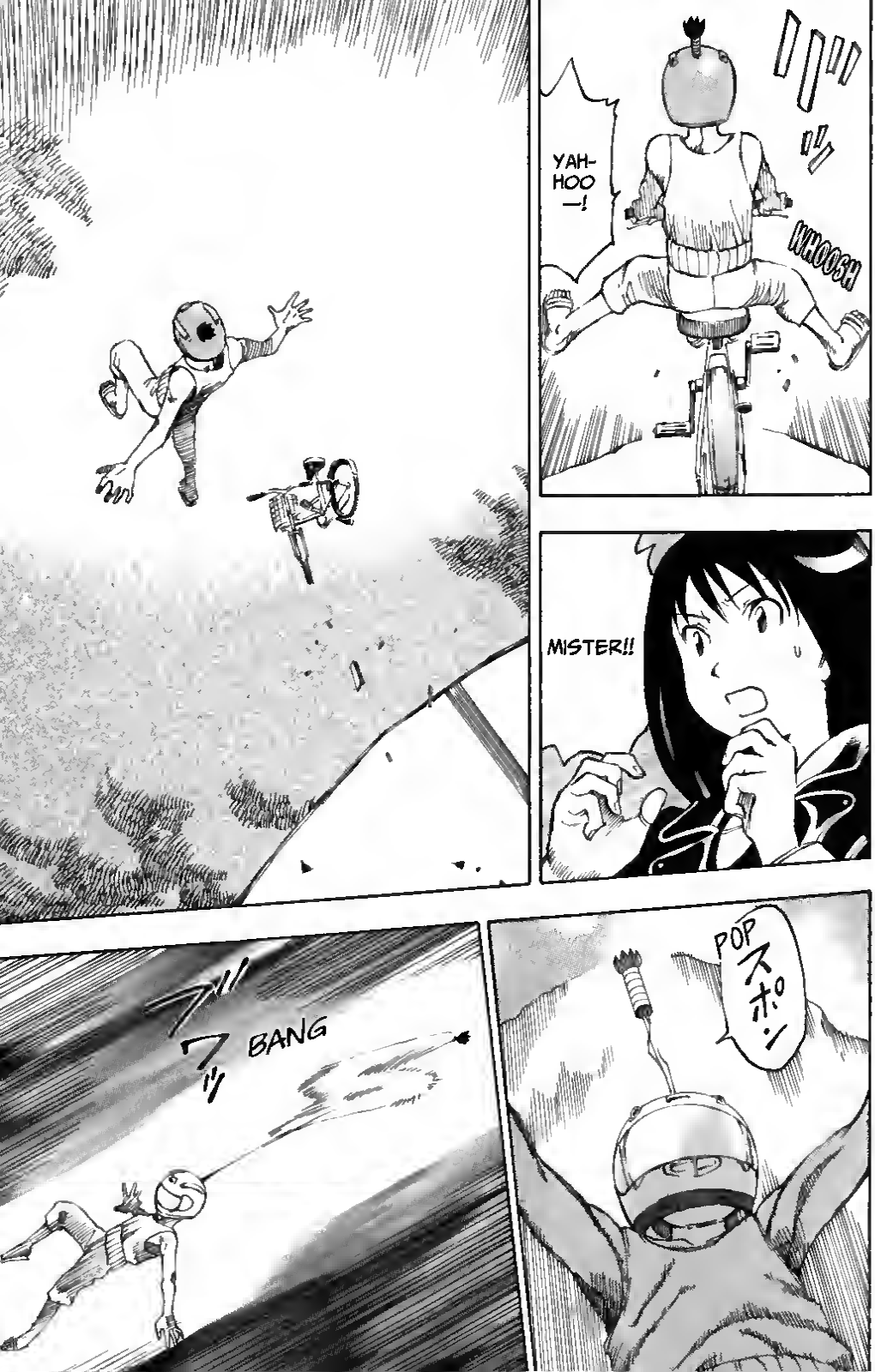

...IT HAPPENS ALL THE TIME.
YOU DON'T SAY...

SUPPOSE YOU'RE OUT RIDING YOUR BIKE, WHEN SUDDENLY YOU FALL OFF A CLIFF!


BUT IF YOU TOOK THE PRECAUTION OF WEARING TAIZOU'S HELMET...!

YAAAAH!!

JUST WATCH AND SEE.
?


YAH-
HOO
—!
WHOOSH
MISTER!!
BANG
POP
スポン

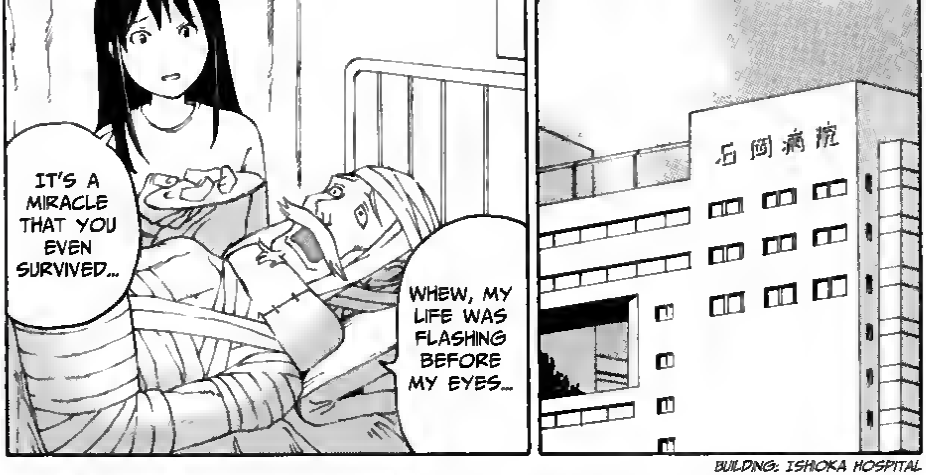
THE HEL...
GUH—
CRK!
I... CAN'T... BREATHE ...!
OH NO!!
FWOOOMP!
IT WORKS!

YOU HAVE TO TAKE OFF THE HELMET!!
UNDO THE CHIN STRAP!!

OH NOOOO!!

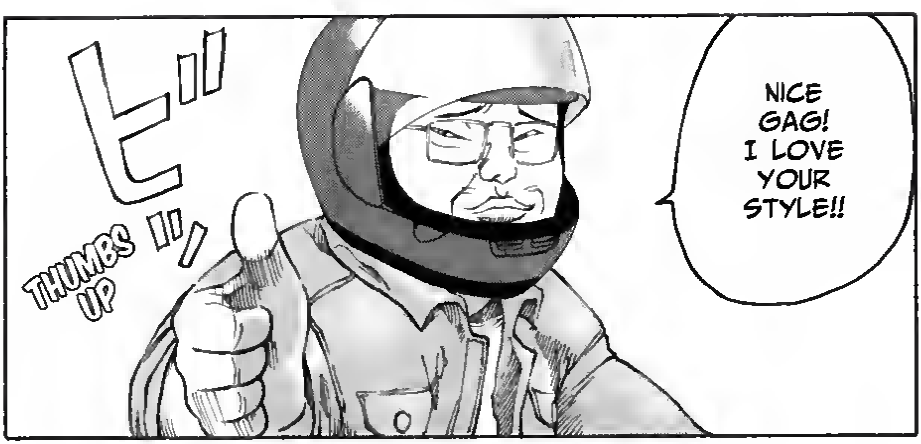
GUH!
GURGH!

POP

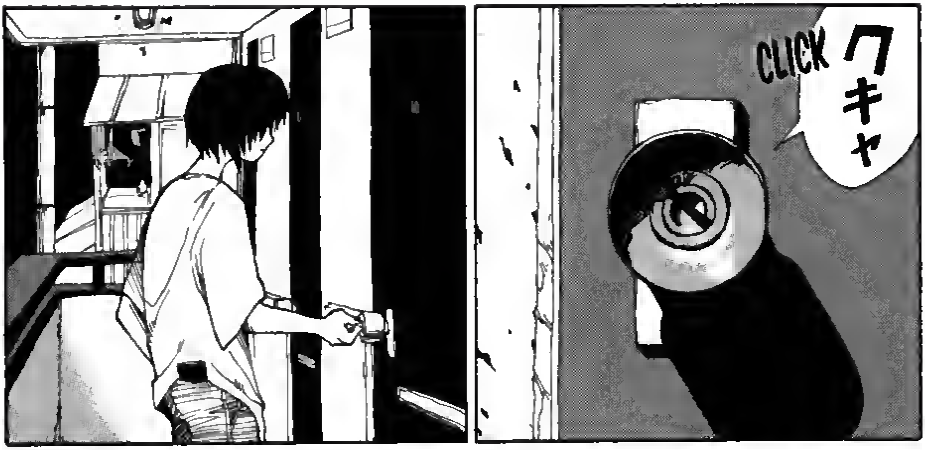


BUILDING: ISHIOKA HOSPITAL

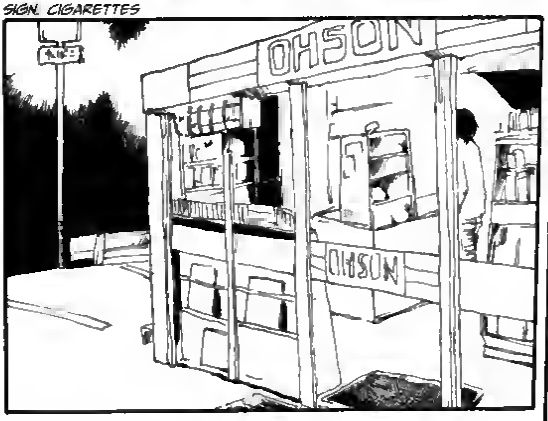
Present for me



HERO



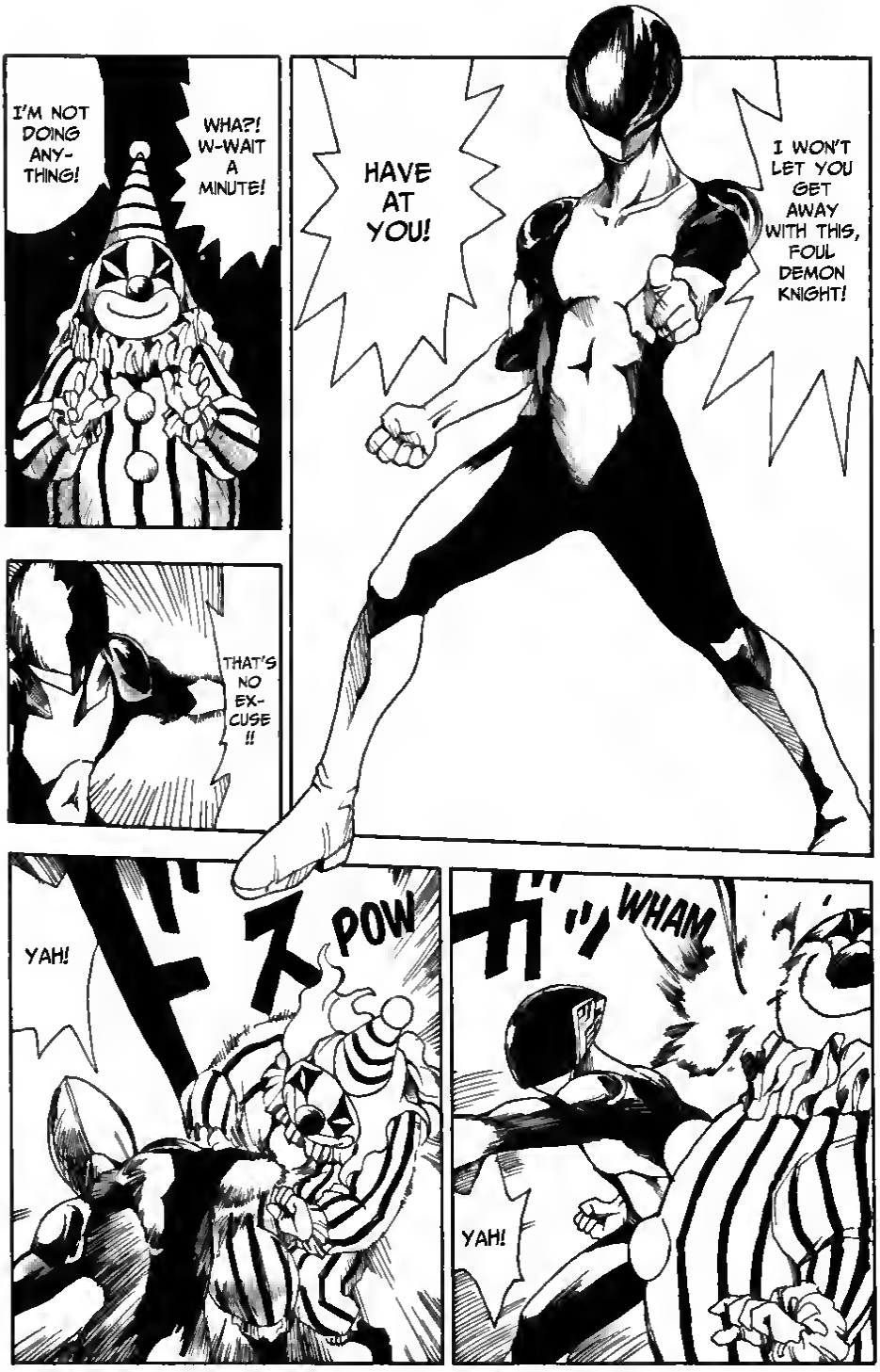
SIGN. CIGARETTES



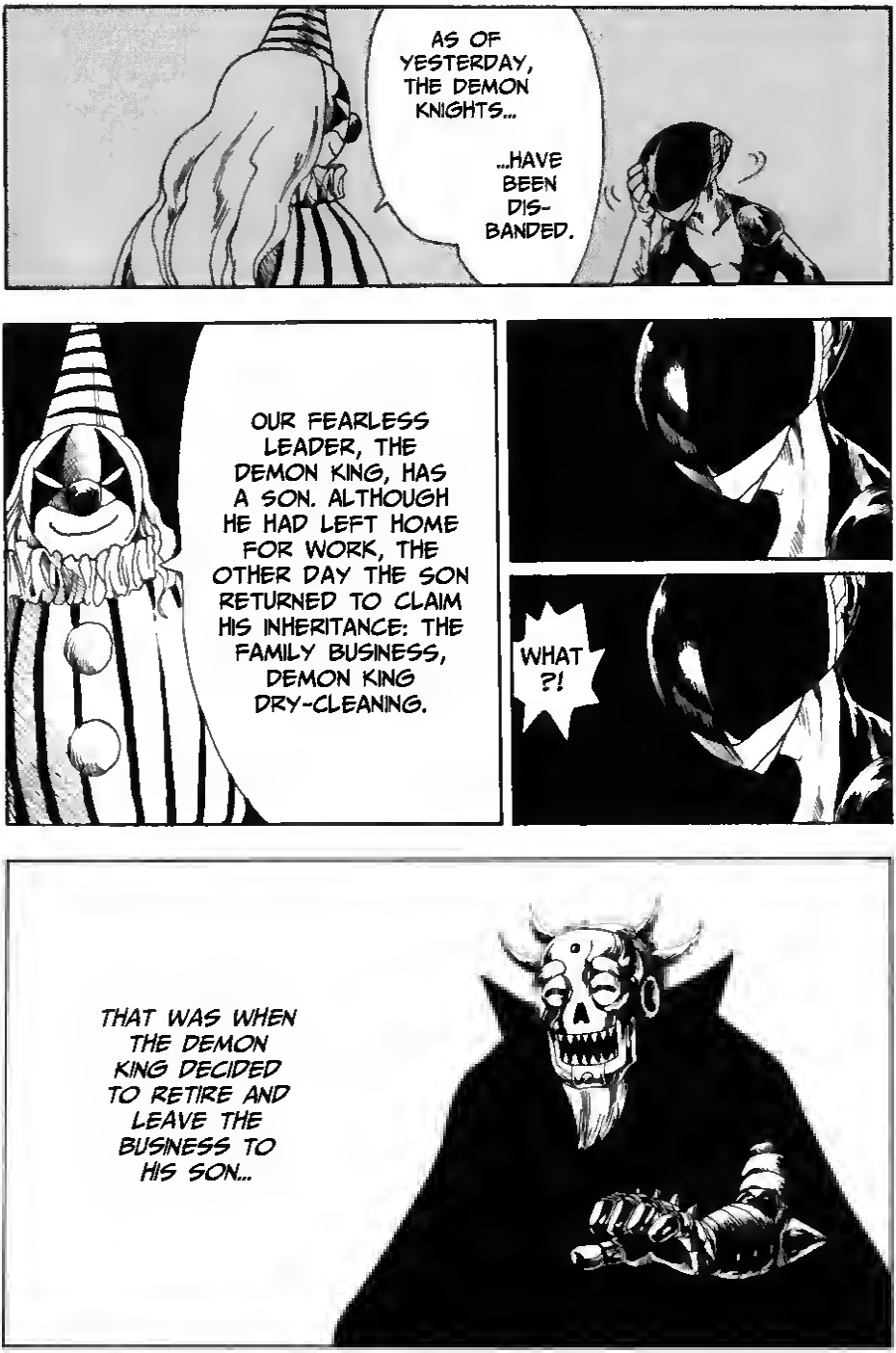
OH NO!! THAT'S THE CLOWN, ONE OF THE OVERLORDS OF THAT EVIL SECRET SOCIETY, DEMON KNIGHTS! WHY'S HE HERE SO LATE AT NIGHT...?

!

TRANS...
...FORM!
LET'S GO!!
DROP
ゴサッ
UR-YAAAH!
GEH!
IT'S HERO ZED!!

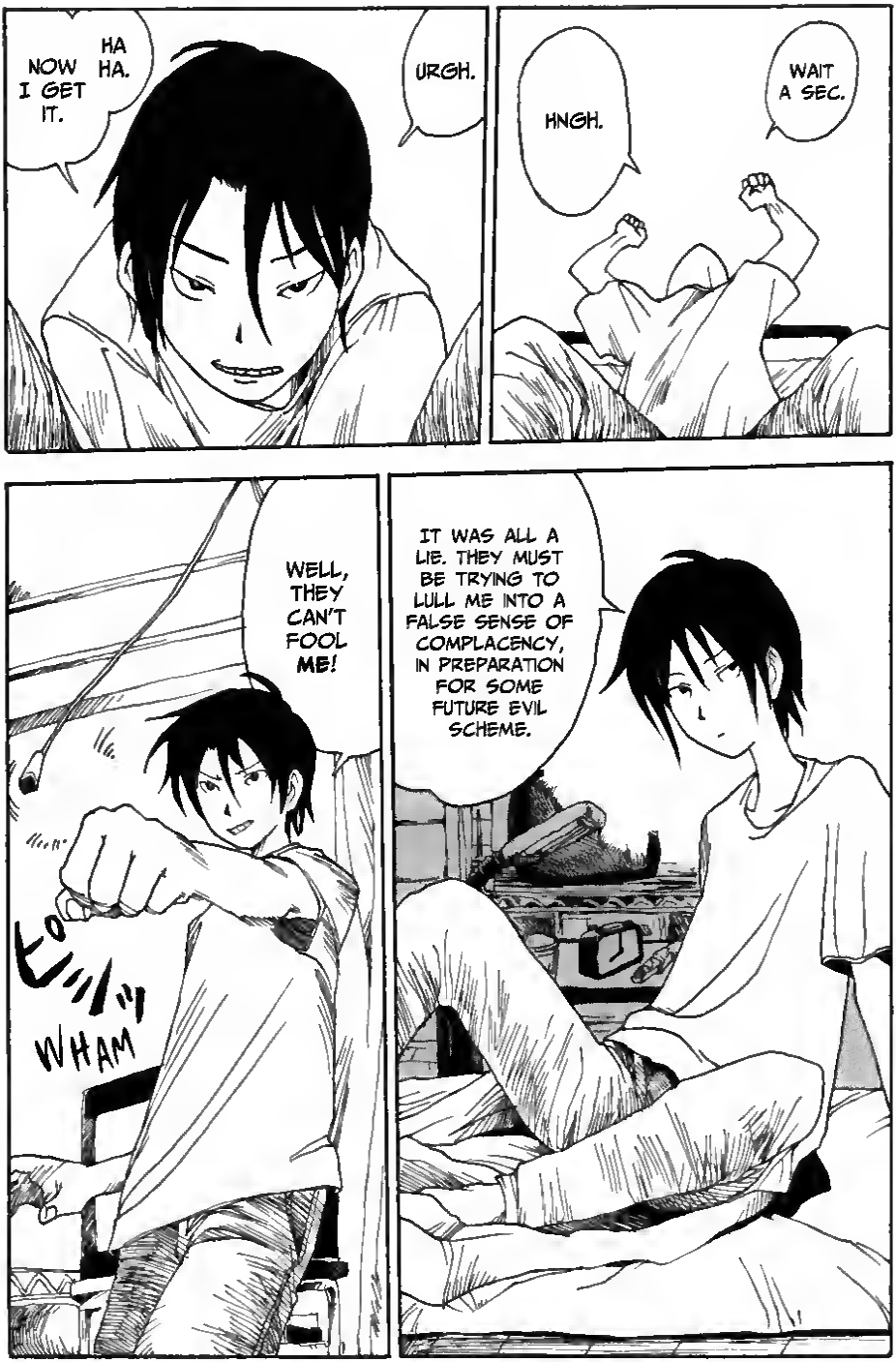

I'M NOT DOING ANY-THING!
WHA?! W-WAIT A MINUTE!
HAVE AT YOU!
I WON'T LET YOU GET AWAY WITH THIS, FOUL DEMON KNIGHT!
THAT'S NO EX-CUSE !!
YAH!
POW
WHAM
YAH!

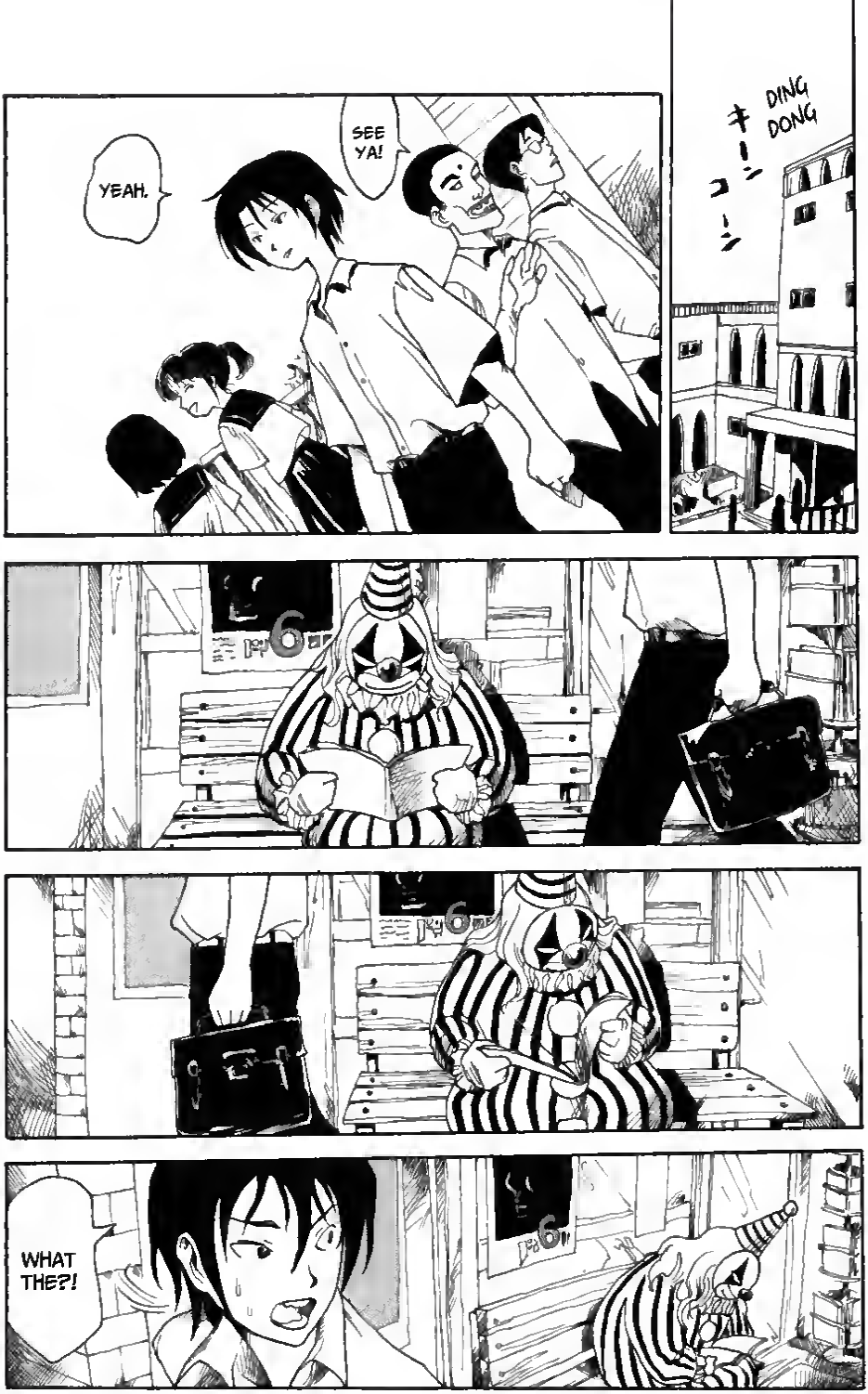
URRYAAAAH!
WHAM
ガン
BAM
ゴッ
YAH!
JUST LISTEN, YOU HOOLIGAN!
BAM
ゴォ
NOW TO FINISH YOU OFF!! ZEEEEEED BEA—
ズバアアアアアアアアアン


AS OF YESTERDAY, THE DEMON KNIGHTS...
...HAVE BEEN DIS-BANDED.
OUR FEARLESS LEADER, THE DEMON KING, HAS A SON. ALTHOUGH HE HAD LEFT HOME FOR WORK, THE OTHER DAY THE SON RETURNED TO CLAIM HIS INHERITANCE: THE FAMILY BUSINESS, DEMON KING DRY-CLEANING.
WHAT ?!
THAT WAS WHEN THE DEMON KING DECIDED TO RETIRE AND LEAVE THE BUSINESS TO HIS SON...

THE DEMON KNIGHTS ARE FINISHED. YOU WIN.
BESIDES, WE'VE BEEN IN A SLUMP EVER SINCE YOU FOILED OUR PLANS FOR SMUGGLING GOLD. DON'T YOU GET IT, HERO ZED?
HISS
HISS
HISS
HUH.
AT LEAST THE CITY'S GOING TO BE MORE PEACE-FUL.
SLURP
SLURP
SHUUURRP

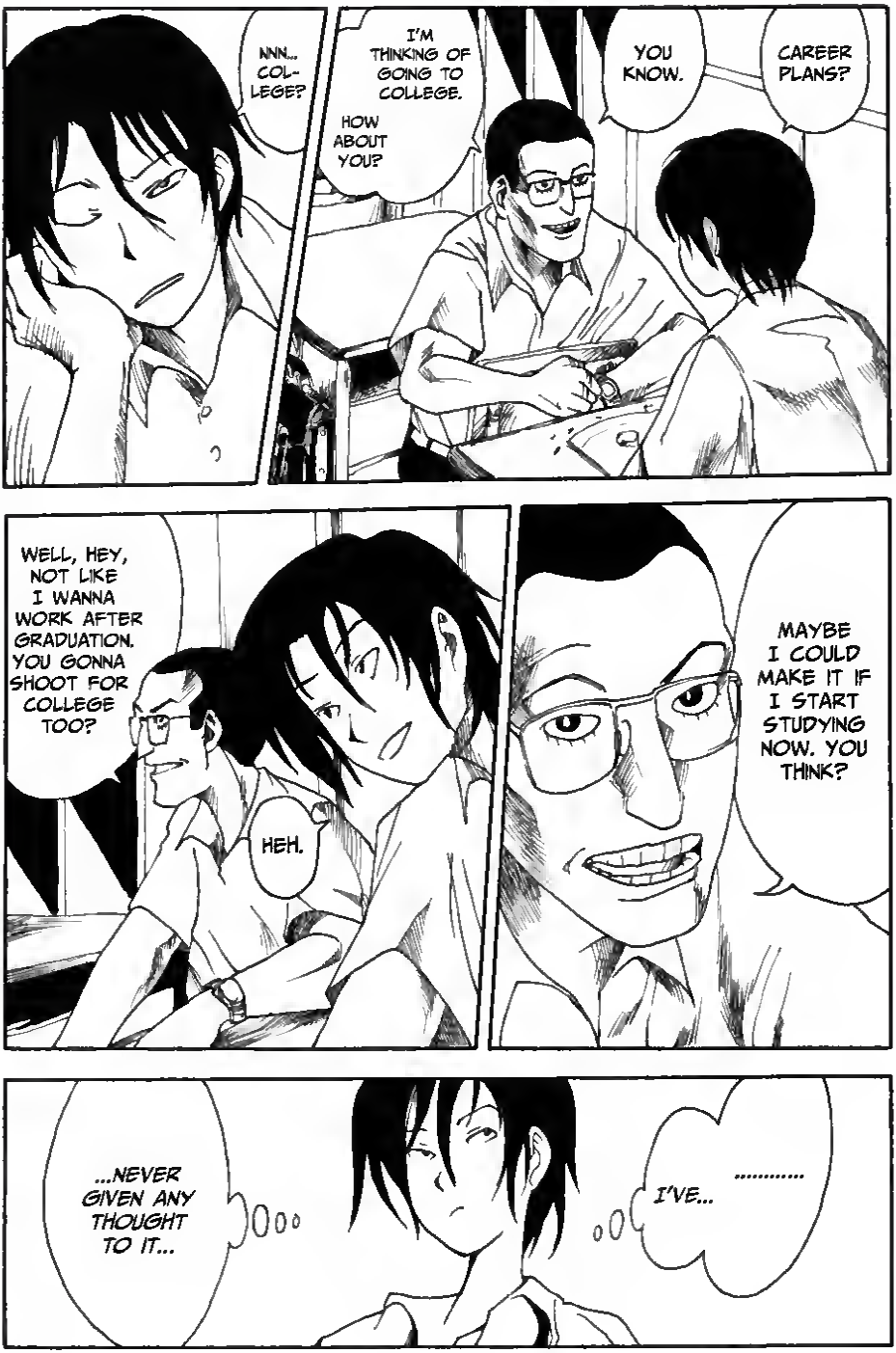
.....
BUT...
...WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO FROM NOW ON?
ドス
WHUMP


HA HA.
NOW I GET IT.
URGH.
HNGH.
WAIT A SEC.
WELL, THEY CAN'T FOOL ME!
WHAM
IT WAS ALL A LIE. THEY MUST BE TRYING TO LULL ME INTO A FALSE SENSE OF COMPLACENCY, IN PREPARATION FOR SOME FUTURE EVIL SCHEME.


SEE YA!
YEAH.
DING DONG
キーンコーン
WHAT THE?!

HEY, CLOWN!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING SITTING OUTSIDE THIS PEACEFUL BOOK-STORE? YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS!
ZIP!
?
.....
...OH, HI.
WH-WHAT ARE THOSE?
DOCUMENTS ON HOW TO INFILTRATE SOME COMPANY?
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, NO. SINCE THE DEMON KNIGHTS BROKE UP, I NEED TO FIND EMPLOYMENT FOR NEXT YEAR.

YOU MEAN... THE GROUP REALLY HAS DISBANDED?
AT LEAST I'M ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES, SINCE I'M STILL A STUDENT. APPARENTLY THE SHRIMP AND THE SAMURAI ARE HAVING TO WORK PART-TIME AS DAY-LABORERS.
HUH?
YES. WEREN'T YOU PAYING ATTENTION YESTERDAY? I TOLD YOU ABOUT THE DEMON KING'S SON, REMEMBER...
ZIPZ


CAREER PLANS?
YOU KNOW.
I'M THINKING OF GOING TO COLLEGE.
HOW ABOUT YOU?
NNN... COL-LEGE?
MAYBE I COULD MAKE IT IF I START STUDYING NOW. YOU THINK?
HEH.
WELL, HEY, NOT LIKE I WANNA WORK AFTER GRADUATION. YOU GONNA SHOOT FOR COLLEGE TOO?
.....
I'VE...
...NEVER GIVEN ANY THOUGHT TO IT...

RRRRRRGH...
I JUST AS-SUMED...
...I'D ALWAYS BE A HERO OF JUSTICE, AND YET...
SWOOP
THUD

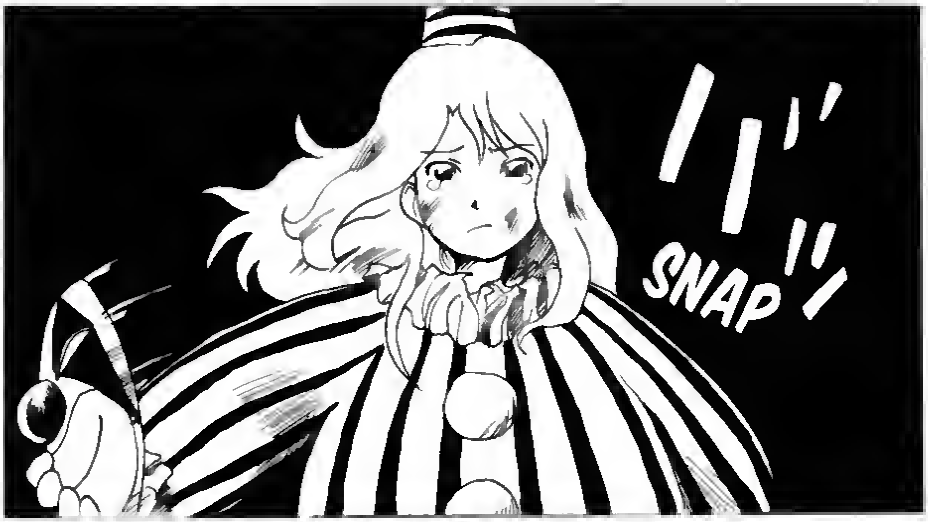
D—
DAM-MIT!
URRGH.
TREMBLE
フラー
ドガッ
POW
RRRA-AAAA!
HEY! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!
CRAP!

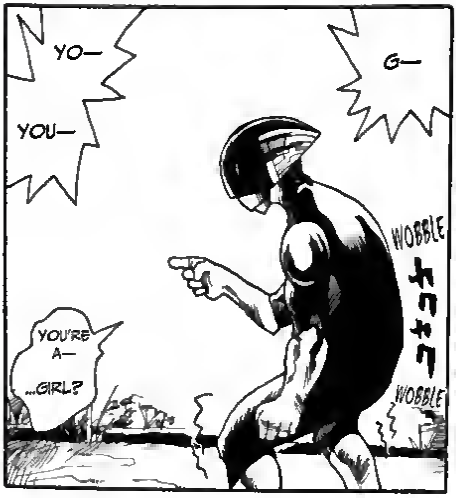
WHY AM I FEELING SO PISSED OFF?!
DAMMIT!
DAMN!
DAMN!
ガシッ!
GRAB!
ANY-BODY!
CRUNCH
SOME-BODY!
CALL FOR HERO ZED!!
CLANG
CLANG
CLANG

SHRED
SHRED
ASK ME TO RESCUE YOU!!
SHRED
SHRED
SHRED
SHRED
I'LL SAVE YOU! PLEASE...
JUST LOOK AT YOUR-SELF, HERO ZED!!

YOU... BAS- TARD...
AT LEAST...
THE CLOWN...
WHAP
ナデッ
!
...I CAN STILL DEFEAT YOU!!

YOU...
...COW-ARD!
RRRRA-AAAAA-AAA!!
BAM
BAM
BAM
GRAB
WHAT'D YOU CALL ME...?


SNAP


YO—
G—
YOU—
WOBBLE
ユラユラ
YOU'RE A—
...GIRL?
WOBBLE

STAB

RIP
UH...

WHAT THE HECK AM I SUPPOSED TO DO, YOU WHINER...?!
スパァーンッ
SLAAAP
IT'S PARTLY YOUR FAULT THAT I HAVE TO GO LOOKING FOR ANOTHER JOB NOW!
AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE AN ALLY OF JUSTICE?!
ガガ
JAB
JAB
YOU CAN'T EVEN THINK FOR YOUR-SELF!!

DESTROYING PROPERTY...
LASHING OUT AT PEOPLE... ≥SOB...≤ SOME "ALLY OF JUSTICE" YOU ARE!
THIS NEIGHBOR-HOOD'S GOT ENOUGH STUPID KID BULLIES RUNNING AROUND DOING THE VERY SAME THINGS!
MORON!
WOBBLE
ガ
WOBBLE
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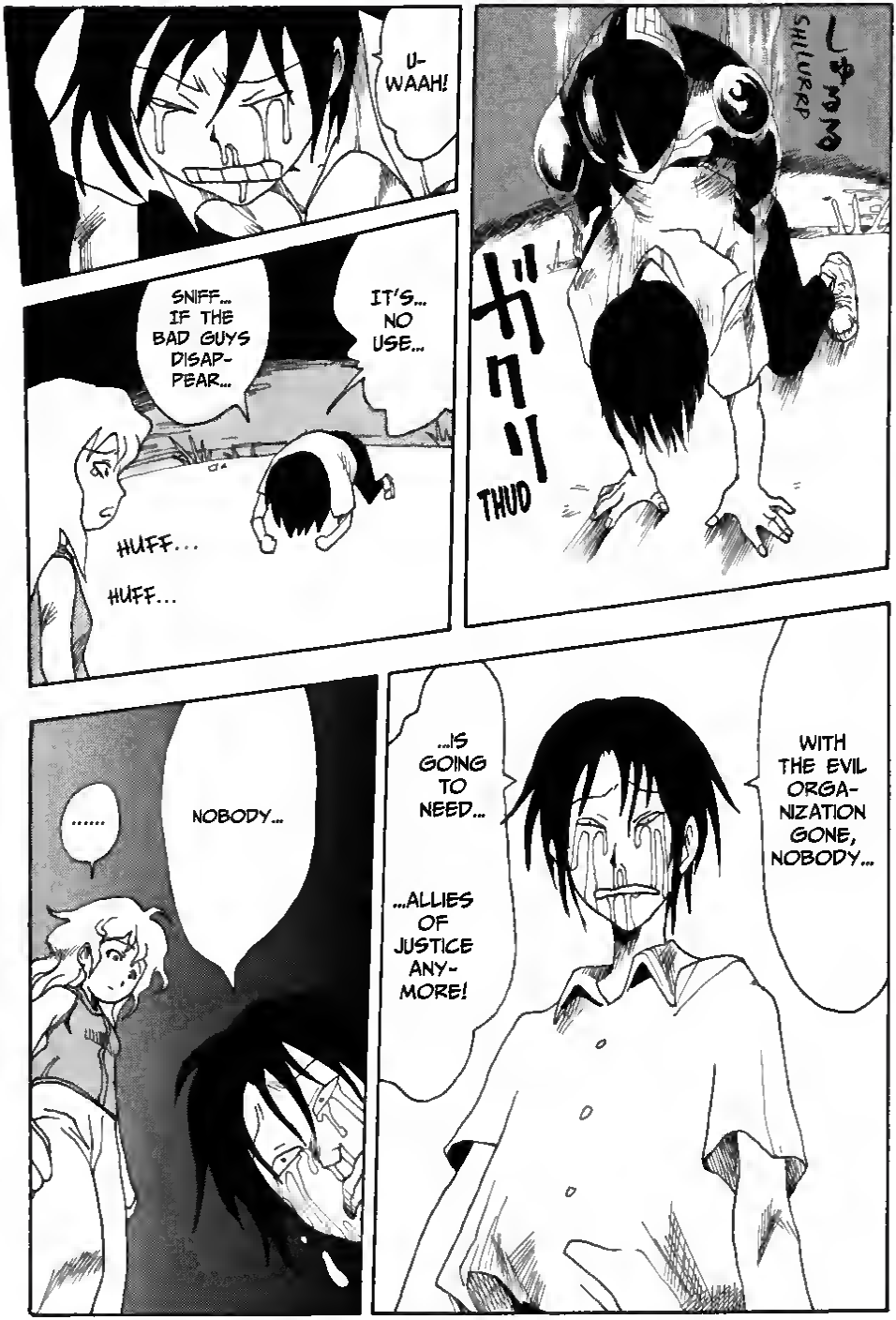
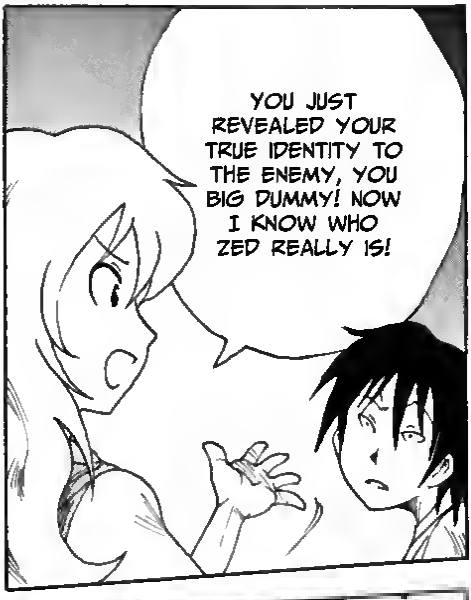
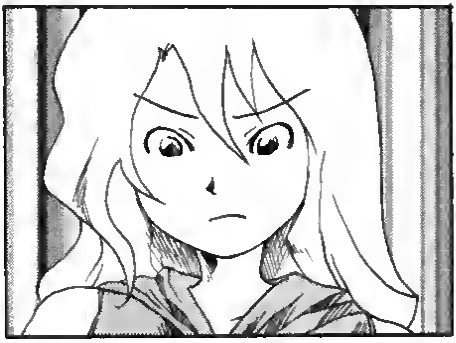
WOBBLE
ガ


U-WAAH!
SNIFF... IF THE BAD GUYS DISAP-PEAR...
IT'S... NO USE...
HUFF...
HUFF...
SHLURP
THUD
WITH THE EVIL ORGA-NIZATION GONE, NOBODY...
...IS GOING TO NEED...
...ALLIES OF JUSTICE ANY-MORE!
NOBODY...
.....

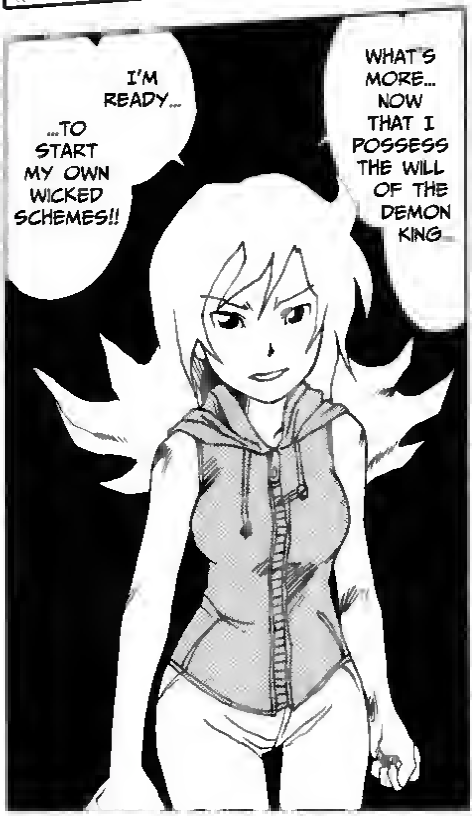
...WILL EVER NEED ME!!
NO-BODY...
OH. THANK YOU.
パクッ
SNAP
...THAT'S OKAY.
SORRY I HIT YOU.
.....

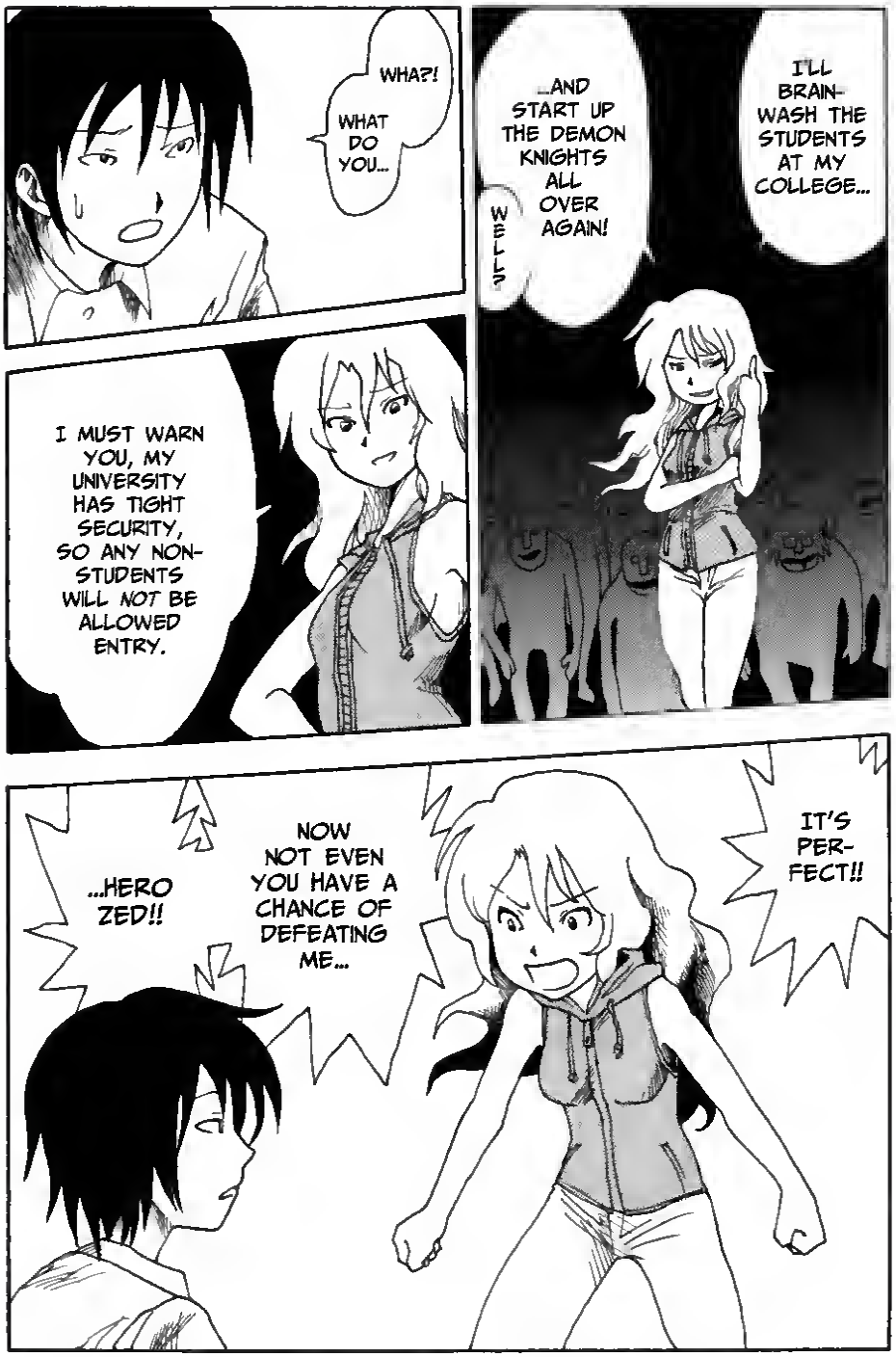
...I ALWAYS EXPECTED TO WORK AS AN ALLY OF JUSTICE... I THOUGHT, SO LONG AS I COULD DO THAT, I'D BE ABLE TO GET BY... EVEN WITH EVERYONE ELSE TALKING ABOUT CAREER PATHS AND SUCH...
SEE, I...
I MUST LOOK LIKE AN IDIOT.
I SAID A BIT TOO MUCH, TOO.
I MEAN, YOU'RE STILL IN HIGH SCHOOL.
HEH, I BET YOU'RE REALLY DISAPPOINTED THAT HERO ZED... IS JUST AN ORDINARY HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENT.
IT JUST MAKES YOU WANT TO LAUGH, RIGHT?
HA... HA HA HA... SNIFF!


YOU JUST REVEALED YOUR TRUE IDENTITY TO THE ENEMY, YOU BIG DUMMY! NOW I KNOW WHO ZED REALLY IS!

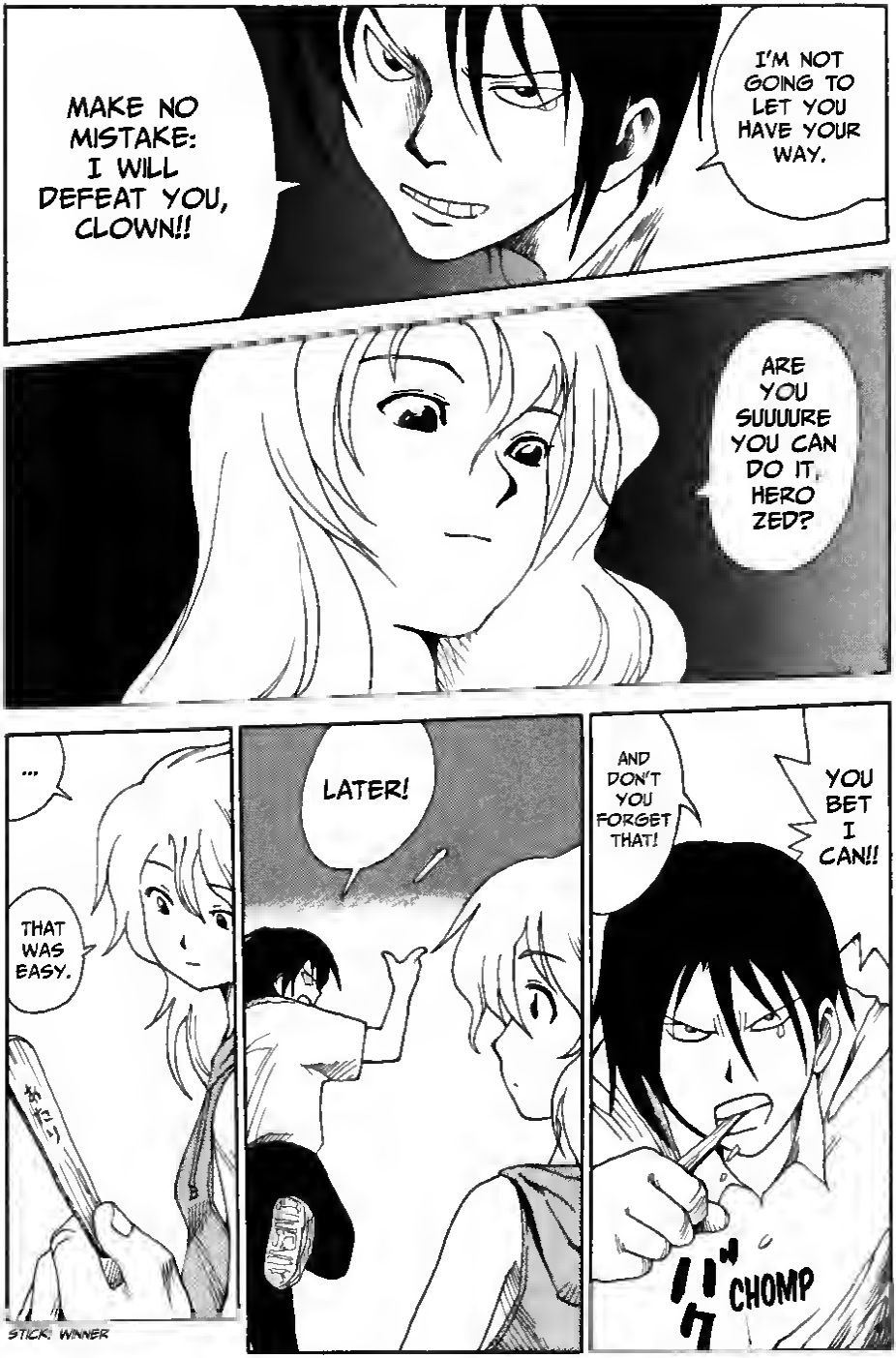


...EVEN IF I TOLD YOU THAT THE DEMON KNIGHTS HAVE BROKEN UP, THAT DOESN'T MEAN I'VE STOPPED BEING THE CLOWN!
HA!


I'M READY...
...TO START MY OWN WICKED SCHEMES!!
WHAT'S MORE... NOW THAT I POSSESS THE WILL OF THE DEMON KING...


WHA?!
WHAT DO YOU...
I MUST WARN YOU, MY UNIVERSITY HAS TIGHT SECURITY, SO ANY NON-STUDENTS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED ENTRY.
I'LL BRAIN-WASH THE STUDENTS AT MY COLLEGE...
...AND START UP THE DEMON KNIGHTS ALL OVER AGAIN!
WELL?
IT'S PER-FECT!!
NOW NOT EVEN YOU HAVE A CHANCE OF DEFEATING ME...
...HERO ZED!!

.....
AHA...
THAT'S EASY! I'LL JUST GET ACCEPTED TO YOUR UNIVERSITY!
SNATCH
ガシィト
UWA-HA-HA-HA-HA!
HAHA HAHA HAHA HAHA HAHA HAHA HA...
WA HA HA HA HA!


MAKE NO MISTAKE: I WILL DEFEAT YOU, CLOWN!!
I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU HAVE YOUR WAY.
ARE YOU SUUUURE YOU CAN DO IT, HERO ZED?
...
THAT WAS EASY.
LATER!
AND DON'T YOU FORGET THAT!
YOU BET I CAN!!
CHOMP

STICK: WINNER

SO THAT WHEN SPRING COMES ...
...I'M BUSY STUDY-ING...
AND THAT'S WHY...
...I CAN FINALLY BE THE CLOWN'S HERO.

Forward, Teen Psychic Squad!

I drew this one after deciding to draw a typical SF comedy.

I experimented with things like adding "mistakes" just to see if any readers would call me out on them ("Where are the other two guys from the front image?!"), making word choices to convey plot elements through back-and-forth dialogue, and using monologues as setups for punchlines. I had a lot of fun drawing it, while fumbling about trying to find a storytelling style that would be unique to manga.

I'm still fumbling for that certain something that "makes manga fun," but after rereading this piece and seeing how the style isn't much different from my current manga, I think my research hasn't really moved forward.

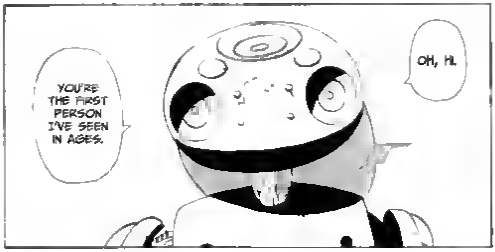
Present for me

This story takes place in a future dark age, where the Earth has fallen into hopeless ruin. Though people may only know me for drawing silly manga, I can still manage a good serious story about once a year.

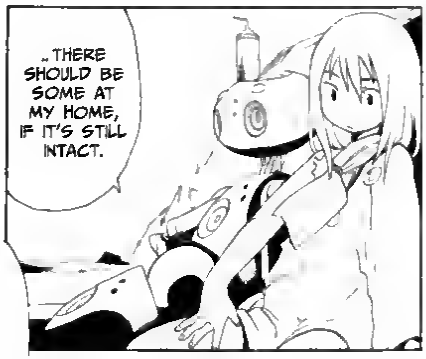
I spent the most time mulling over the writing for this early manga. I tried to assemble the bare minimum number of lines and episodes that would lead into a single panel with the rakugo style punchline "make yourself a friend."

In the process, I used the contrivance of only showing the robot's lines, emphasizing the sense of loss after the robot stops, to put some extra force behind the punchline—really pretty obnoxious of me, showing off like that ..

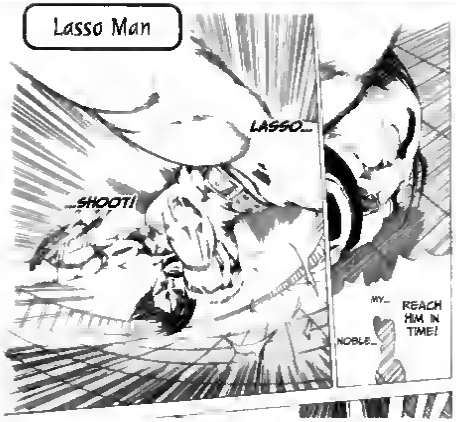
It's the kind of heartfelt story that I can't draw anymore, now that I've become a jaded adult; it's also my favorite out of all my early short works.



The cover of this short story collection depicts the two of them later on. It's a bright future for those two, now that the robot's been safely rebuilt.



Lasso Man



This short story brought me my first fan mail—two letters, in fact.
Both were from elderly men.
They may have felt an empathetic connection with the image of a miserable yet heroic man, fired from his company and seeking his own purpose within society.
It's a classic example of readers finding meanings within a story that the author had never imagined or intended.

All I'd had in mind was the character of a silly older guy, the Lasso Charge, and that punchline at the end—nothing more.

Sorry about that.

Countdown

YOU NEED TO CONTRIBUTE SOMETHING TOO, CHIEF!
YEAH!
WHAT'S WITH YOU, MAN?! YOU JUST KEEP SHOOTING DOWN EVERYONE ELSE'S IDEAS! WE'LL NEVER GET ANY-WHERE AT THIS RATE!

This is from when I participated in a project for *Comic Flapper* magazine, where several newcomers drew one-shots on the theme of "The Destruction of Humanity." Because they would be printing one-shots by different people on the same theme, I tried as hard as I could to come up with material the other artists wouldn't have thought of, but after tossing around a bunch of plot-lines, nothing was really sticking out for me. So then I got the crazy idea of turning my brainstorming itself into a manga.

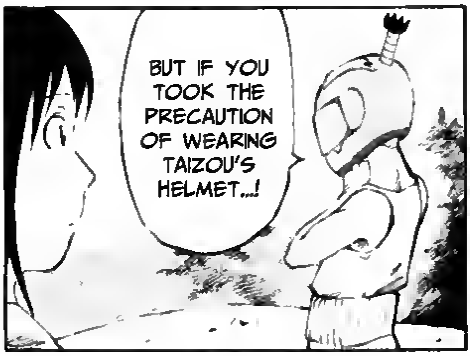
Oddly enough, that stuck.

Barbara

So... yeah.
I didn't intend to deconstruct the so-called "beautiful intruder" trope, where a gorgeous girl ends up living with a loser protagonist, but just to do a tragicomedy of how that "dream" could play out sometimes.

Taizou's Helmet

I seem to have developed some kind of grudge against helmets.



Hero

I drew this at a time when my college life was drawing to a climax. Although graduation was approaching, I hadn't decided on a career, I wanted to be a manga artist, but didn't know how to go about it. This frustration came to a head during a college career fair, which is when I snuck out right in the middle of it, ran back to my place, and drew this within a week. Out of some desire for a foothold in the industry, I took it to Kodansha's *Afternoon* Magazine; by a stroke of luck, it was just before the deadline for the seasonal prize competition, and so this became my debut work: "Hero."

Looking back on it now, I was going through some stormy times then. Although the manga is immature, and quite bluntly reflects the impatience and frustration with the future that I felt at the time, it's also a monumental piece that helped me to understand that, in some cases, things really will work out if you try your utmost.

Now that it's over, I would like to thank all of those who took part in publishing this short story collection, starting with Media Factory, Kodansha, and Shounen Gahousha, and including everyone else who's picked up this book.

Masakazu Ishiguro

Stories First Published In:

Forward, Teen Psychic Squad! (*Comic Flapper*, January 2003)
Present for me (*Comic Flapper*, May 2003)
Lasso Man (*Comic Flapper*, December 2003)
Countdown (*Comic Flapper*, October 2002)
Barbara (*Comic Flapper*, October 2002)
Taizou's Helmet (Unpublished work, 2004)
Hero (Kodansha *Afternoon*, Seasonal Edition No 5, 2000)

Present for me
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